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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

MONSIEUR LEON DE WAILLY is known to the English public (at least to the readers of the "Edinburgh Review") as the successful translator of Burns, and as pre-eminent among the most successful translators of Shakespeare. Considering the difficulty of the task he undertook, there is perhaps no rendering of Shakespeare into French so accurately and so poetically true to the original as his "Hamlet."

It is not irrelevant here to write these proofs of M. de Wailly's mastery over the English language, and his familiarity with English habits of thought. No Frenchman, not thoroughly imbued with them, would probably have conceived the project of writing a novel on the singular and unexplained relations of Swift with the two distinguished and charming women, whom it was his lot and his pleasure to make miserable. In pursuing the labyrinth of this strange history, M. de Wailly, it will be seen, leans constantly and strongly to his hero. We beg to protest against being held in any degree responsible for M. de Wailly's opinion, or infected with his partisanship. We have been extremely struck by the ingenuity of our author's defence of Swift, the depth and *finesse* of his knowledge of human nature, the minuteness and delicacy of his delineations of character and manners, and the ease and simplicity of his style; and we think it may

be interesting to English readers to see this strangest chapter of English domestic history handled by an intelligent and accomplished Frenchman.

We have been the rather tempted to translate it, that the original is now inaccessible. It has been printed only as a *feuilleton*. If this should appear to any one to diminish its value, we beg them to recollect what sort of novels have of late enjoyed popularity in France. The French public have been too long fed upon the coarsest and most exciting stimulants to relish fare which its very delicacy would render insipid to a jaded palate.

In the second place, the French are, generally speaking, extremely incurious about other countries, and little interested in faithful representations of foreign manners.

There are certain traditional types of the Englishman, the German or the Spaniard, which do well enough for all the purposes of modern scene-painting. The light and minute but accurate touches of M. de Wailly's cabinet picture are precisely what would detract from its value in a market where such standards are excepted.

We need hardly remind our readers, that the qualities we have ascribed to M. de Wailly's book, are those most formidable to a translator. Without affecting to have caught its facility and elegance, we flatter ourselves we have presented our readers with a faithful version of a novel which, by its style and character, belongs to an older and, many will think, a better age of fiction in France—before the “convulsionary literature,” the influence of which is, in many ways, so fatally felt, had unfitted the public taste for calm and ingenuous appreciations of human motives and actions, or faithful and delicate delineations of human character.

L. D. G.

LONDON,
JULY 27, 1850.

STELLA AND VANESSA.

CHAPTER I.

AT the beginning of the eighteenth century, a great event occurred in Laracor, a quiet village in Ireland:—the parson of the parish died.

A rural dean, who happened to pass that way, perceiving the agitation of the parishioners, did not fail to note down in his report that it would be difficult to find a fit substitute for the late Incumbent, who was adored by his flock. But his zeal only brought upon him a smart reprimand, as it turned out on inquiry that this adored parson had never set foot in the parish: he was one of those worldly ecclesiastics—the younger son of a noble family—who was provided for by a plurality of livings, and who left all the work to be done by a Curate, while he enjoyed the profits himself.

But he was none the less regretted by his flock for being unknown to them. It is not every vicar that can afford not to reside. A parish consisting of about sixty Protestants was not difficult to serve. It could hardly be hoped that the new Incumbent would give up part of his emoluments to an assistant, and therefore the present Curate would be obliged to leave the place.

Now the Reverend Dr. William Tisdal, Curate of Laracor, had won the esteem and affection of the whole parish, by his modesty, his gentleness, by a charity, which had none of the ungracious air of mere duty, and by a life full of virtue, toleration, and simplicity. The parish, alarmed at the idea of losing him, conceived the project of getting him appointed Vicar. Thus one fine morning, Tisdal found himself a candidate for the living, without ever having been consulted on the subject.

The living of Laracor was not a rich one. But it was within twenty miles of Dublin, and the humble services of a country Curate, and the wishes of a country parish, would have afforded but slender ground for hope. But the young man was supported by the Bishop of the diocese, who took a strong interest in the affair, and seemed to have no doubt of the success of his recommendation.

Such powerful patronage gave confidence even to the least sanguine, and the parishioners rejoiced beforehand in the triumph of their own candidate; when they learnt that the credit of the Bishop had been overborne by that of Lord Berkeley, one of the Lord Justices of Ireland, and that one of his chaplains had got the living.

The disappointment was keenly felt at Laracor. Tisdal was pitied; the unknown Vicar was dreaded. Even the Catholics, spite of their systematic indifference towards the affairs of the Protestants, regretted the probable departure of so inoffensive a parson as Tisdal.

In the midst of the excitement of the village, and the disappointment of his own hopes, Tisdal, the object of all this sympathy, and certainly the most injured of the malcontents, was, nevertheless, the most resigned. No doubt he would have been very glad to have got the living. A country Curate may surely be allowed, without being charged with ambition, to wish for a more independent position, and an income somewhat less narrow. But Tisdal was one of those lovers of quiet who shrink from all struggle, to whom nothing is so dreadful as suspense, and who submit contentedly to misfortunes before which they need only bow the head.

Besides, his cause was pleaded by so many voices, that it was easy for him to be silent, without being supposed to have renounced his claims; for the grumblers were headed by the two persons in the village most nearly belonging to the Curate; namely, his housekeeper and the parish clerk.

There is no connection in life, whether of business, marriage, or friendship, in which the partnership is not far more complete than might be supposed. It is in vain that self-love, or a sense of justice, leads us to assert the responsibility of our own opinions. The world persists

in inferring the thoughts of the one partner from the words of the other.

Tisdal was an example of this. The complaints of his adherents were looked upon as the veiled expression of his own regrets ; and, we are bound to add, that the clerk and the housekeeper, judging from their own feelings and their own narrow views of morality, never doubted that he would be but too happy to be enabled to play his part of quiet dignity and heroic self-sacrifice, without detriment to his own interests.

The fact was that, like most vulgar-minded people, they measured everything by their own rule ; and had not observed that Tisdal, absorbed for the most part in a sort of dreamy indolence of mind and body, had but a very imperfect perception of that which was passing around him. Possibly, the favour with which he was regarded in the district was owing to this very defect in his organisation, rather than to any of his excellent qualities ; as it had prevented him from taking part in the thousand and one squabbles which are rife in all such places.

Encouraged by Tisdal's silence, and by the exasperation of his supposed confidants, the parishioners were loud in their protestations—empty, it is true they were—when some further information seemed to offer a chance of remedying the evil, at least in part. Together with the living of Laracor, the new Incumbent held that of Rath-beggan, and was, moreover, Rector of Agher. It was, therefore, possible that he might not reside in his new parish, and that he might keep Tisdal as his Curate. Moreover, the parishioners might hope to influence his choice, and by some violent demonstration to disgust him with Laracor. A plot was formed with these views, and Roger Coxe, for this was the name of the parish clerk, of whom we have already spoken, placed himself boldly at its head. His position in the church ought to have inspired Roger Coxe with more discretion, but his character did not admit of such considerations ; moreover, he had no fear of losing his place, as he was elected by the parish authorities.

Roger Coxe was a jovial fellow—active, bustling, enthusiastic, and ardent in hatred as in affection. He had

formerly been a hatter, in Dublin ; but having failed in business, had been but too happy to be chosen parish clerk of Laracor. But his new profession had failed to make him forget the habits of his old one ; and, amid the monotony of a country village, he was apt to long for the life and gaiety of the city in which he had lived. He was evidently a man misplaced in life, who ought never to have been a hatter, and still less a parish clerk, but a soldier. He consoled himself for his false position :—

1. By never analysing it ;—so much the better for him ;
2. By always wearing a scarlet waistcoat, under the pretext that he belonged to the church militant upon earth ;
3. By causing, without any really evil intention, as much uproar as possible in the quiet village of Laracor.

When Mistress Jebb, Tisdal's housekeeper, found that the vague threats uttered by Tisdal's partisans were likely to be carried into effect, she began to give ear to the tardy suggestions of prudence. Owing to her situation in the Curate's house, she was too important a person in the village not to act with some circumspection. If in the first instance she had been hurried away by interest, she was now restrained by pride. Moreover, things had come to a pass, at which active co-operation on her part was no longer necessary. She had assisted in preparing the materials for a conflagration. She might now leave it to other hands to set fire to them, especially to such hands as Roger Coxe's.

The nomination of the new Vicar was indeed a piece of good luck for a turbulent spirit, and Coxe had made the most of it. But a still better opportunity for mischief was about to offer itself. The enemies were about to meet face to face, for the Vicar was coming to take possession of his living. Coxe, ever on the alert, had been among the first to know this ; and taking advantage of the absence of the Curate, who was dining out in the neighbourhood, he hastened to communicate his plan of the campaign to the most faithful, though most diplomatic, of his allies.

" Well, neighbour, have you heard the news?"—" What news, gossip?"

" Why, that to-morrow he will be here!"—" Whom do

you mean?" asked Mistress Jebb, pretending not to understand him.

"Who? Why the new Vicar, of course."—"Oh, yes!" said she, with affected indifference.

"It is quite certain, I tell you, neighbour: he is coming to-morrow morning in his coach, like a Bishop—in a coach and four, with footmen covered with gold lace. Neither more nor less."

On hearing this pompous description, Mistress Jebb's face brightened up. It was clear that the owner of a coach and four must be the son of some nobleman, who would follow the example of his predecessor.

"Marry come up, neighbour, what an honour for the parish. He'll not be the man to do us the favour of living here."—"Indeed, but he will though, gossip."

This was an answer so startling to Mistress Jebb, that she changed colour. But she knew that Coxe loved a jest, and a moment's reflection convinced her that he could not be serious.

"None of your nonsense, gossip; would a man with a coach and footmen bury himself alive in a village? I am not so easily taken in. He is only coming to take possession: while his horses are being baited, he will take a look at the church, and reckon the tithes, and then away he will drive in a jiffey—leaving his blessing behind him."

"I tell you, neighbour, he won't drive off again. He is not a carriage gentleman at all. The coach he's coming in belongs to my Lord Berkeley, who lends it him to give him consequence, because evil tongues had spoken ill of the feelings of the parish."

"Well," said Mistress Jebb pettishly; "a Vicar who resides here won't want a curate; so we have nothing to do but to pack up our trunks."

"Would it not be much better," said Coxe coolly, "to prevent the Vicar from unpacking his?"

"And pray, how would you set about preventing him?"

"Easily enough, gossip. A man can't live with people in spite of their teeth, or fight single-handed against a whole parish; and there are some hot-headed fellows in Laracor."

On hearing Coxe speak with such an air of assurance,

Mistress Jebb pricked up her ears. She saw that there was a plot, and she wished to fathom it without committing herself. She therefore persisted in unbelief.

"Ay, ay," said she, "I know the folks of this place. They will swagger enough to-day, and to-morrow when they see my Lord Berkeley's livery, they'll all toss up their hats and fight for the honour of drawing the coach."

"Like enough, gossip; but suppose they were to upset it?"

"Upset it!" said the housekeeper, whose nostrils fluttered with delight; "those are mere words, neighbour, mere words."

"What are words to-day may be deeds to-morrow. He must ride in a coach and four, forsooth, must he—an intriguing vagabond. Well, well, he shall have a guard of honour into the bargain, such as he little expects."

Mistress Jebb's curiosity was satisfied.

"For shame, Mr. Cox, for shame. If you go on so I must withdraw. Not that I want to dictate to you, neighbour—you are old enough to judge for yourself; but you must feel, that in my situation as Mr. Tisdal's housekeeper, I cannot listen to any such talk."

Coxe was by no means the dupe of Mistress Jebb's hypocrisy, but he had no hopes of making her speak any plainer. They were a strange pair of accomplices. Coxe did not move a step without first seeking the approbation of the housekeeper, which she never bestowed upon him save in the form of blame. By a tacit understanding they had adopted this sort of cipher, by means of which they could correspond safe from all indiscretion. By this means, too, they discharged themselves of responsibility in their own eyes, one by his confidences, and the other by her reproaches. They tossed the ball from one to the other, until it ended by falling between them.

"You are quite right, gossip," said Coxe, with a sedate air. "That's just what I said myself to all those turbulent fellows. In my situation as parish clerk I cannot listen to any such talk. After all, a Vicar is a Vicar, and we owe him obedience and respect."

Mrs. Jebb made a wry face. Could her example have inspired him with prudence?

"By the way, in sober sadness," said Coxe, with a still more serious air, "what are you going to do to-morrow to welcome him?"—"I!" said she tartly.

"Yes; ain't you going to give him a grand dinner?"—"I dare say! I wish he may get it!"

"No, really. Then could you not lend me your pots and pans?"—"Lend them to you! What do you want with them?"

"Oh, more noise than work." And seizing the poker and tongs, he made such a clatter close to Mistress Jebb's ears with this new sort of triangle, that it was not from hypocrisy alone that she snatched the instrument out of his hands.

"Be quiet, do, roysterer," said she, with ill-concealed satisfaction.

"Why, gossip, you know one cannot dance without music."—"Dance, did you say!"

"To be sure. David danced before the ark, and why should not a parish clerk dance before his Vicar's coach?"

And he began to execute a grotesque dance, capering round the parlour, snapping his fingers and uttering shrill cries; Mistress Jebb tried to stop him as he passed before her, but he seized her round the waist, and, spite of her screeching to him to stop, and abusing him for a rascal, he whirled her round in a frantic jig until she had lost her breath and her speech together. Then, still capering and pirouetting, he rushed out of the room, while his partner, panting and dizzy, with her cap hanging down and her hair about her ears, sank exhausted into an arm-chair.

CHAPTER II.

AN arm-chair is a convenient place for meditation. When Mistress Jebb had recovered her breath, she buried herself completely in the cushions, stretched out her legs, and began to reflect with satisfaction on the conspiracy which was to break out on the morrow.

Mistress Jebb was forty-five, and women of the lower

class grow old more rapidly than their betters. She had never been rich nor handsome. She had been left a widow with a son, who was eight years old, and had small chance of finding a second husband; all her future, therefore, depended upon Tisdal. For want of a better prospect, she had made up her mind to live and die in his service. Gentle and absorbed in his own thoughts, as he was, she had not found much difficulty in acquiring the complete control over his household; and from being a cookmaid, she had quickly insinuated herself into the more respectable place of housekeeper.

Her child, thanks to Tisdal, received the rudiments of education in the parish school; and maternal ambition caused her to look forward to nothing less than seeing him one day take holy orders. She had, therefore, made herself as important in the household as she well could, and this household it was now her interest to aggrandise.

The appointment of Lord Berkeley's *protégé* had thrown cold water upon her schemes. Her own existence and that of her son were threatened; she saw herself driven into exile. And now a ray of hope suddenly appeared; it was like the recovery of a lost sheep.

Without sharing all the hopes of the sanguine Roger Coxe, Mistress Jebb could not but admit the possibility of disgusting the new Vicar with Laracor; and, like a miser who has found his lost treasure, she was in the act of recapitulating all the advantages of her position; not only for herself, but likewise for the future prospects of her son, when the interesting object of her maternal solicitude returned from school with an empty satchel and a dirty face.

"Already eight o'clock! and I have forgotten to cook master's supper!"

She hastened into the kitchen to prepare the Curate's frugal meal, and then returned into the parlour to lay the cloth, the child following her the while like her shadow. In honour of her hopes for the morrow, she placed upon the table a jug of claret, a treat she only allowed her master on great occasions, although, thanks to the smugglers, wine was not dear in Ireland. She had just set

down the jug, when a man dressed in black walked into the room.

"Is Doctor Tisdal at home?"—"No, Sir."

"Where is he?"—"He is dining out."

"When will he come home?"—"To supper."

"That's right," said the stranger, seating himself in Tisdal's arm-chair. "Pour me out a glass of wine."

"Does the man take our house for an inn?" said Mistress Jebb to herself, though sorely tempted to ask the question aloud. But she contented herself with taking no notice of the order he had given her, and asking in a tone of voice which she endeavoured to render highly significant: "Whom am I to announce to my master, when he comes in?"—"His master."

The tone of voice harmonised perfectly with the answer. Mistress Jebb let her arms fall by her side in terror and amazement.

"Well! and the wine? did not you hear me?"

Mistress Jebb was not exactly timid; but the stranger had a most determined voice, and frowned with eyebrows like those of Jove. The poor woman lost all her presence of mind. Whilst she stretched forth her hand towards the glass jug, the stranger took up the Curate's glass, and holding it to the light, said in a rough voice: "This glass is not clean."—"Indeed I washed it well," replied Mistress Jebb, forgetting in her agitation that it was beneath her dignity to justify herself.

"I see you did—I see it only too plainly. Come, quick; give me another."

Could it be to her—to Mistress Jebb—that any one dared to speak in such a tone? And yet she obeyed this insulting order.

"The room is cold," said the stranger, after she had filled the fresh glass; "make a better fire."

After so many acts of submission, Mistress Jebb had nothing left for it but to obey. Thus two cocks will fight with fierce determination. But once subdued, the beaten cock resigns himself, and never renews the fight.

Mistress Jebb went to fetch some turf, and the child was following her, when the stranger called to him: "Here, you little blackguard, give me that newspaper."

The name of little blackguard was well deserved; the child was much spoiled and very obstinate; and probably a less brutal request would have been less readily complied with. But the stranger's rough voice subdued the son as it had subdued the mother, and he fetched the paper without receiving the smallest thanks for his trouble.

Meanwhile Mistress Jebb had made up the fire.

"That will do," said the traveller, "you may go—I don't want you any more—go and attend to your saucepans; and mind you do your best, for I am not easy to please, I forewarn you."

"What next?" thought Mistress Jebb. "I vow he is going to stay supper! What am I to do? Can I leave him alone? Will it be safe? God knows who he may be? But I can't stop in the parlour; the supper will burn; and then how can I contradict such a man as this?" So she determined upon a middle course—she would go, leaving her son to watch the stranger.

At the bottom of his heart, the child did not much like his task; but he dared not resist before a man with such thick eyebrows, and he seated himself sulkily in the chimney-corner, while Mistress Jebb returned to the kitchen.

She had not been there above five minutes, when she heard awful shrieks uttered in the voice of her son. She hurried back into the parlour, and found the stranger pulling the child's ear.

This time maternal affection was stronger than fear. "What is the matter? What right have you to beat my child?"

"Oh! is this child yours?"—"To be sure he is."

"I wish you joy of him. A pretty education you have given him. You must have been of a tolerably discreet age, too, when he was born, and yet you have never taught him not to play with fire."

Her maternal rights, and the arrogance with which she insisted upon them, in no degree daunted the imperturbable assurance of the stranger; and Mistress Jebb, utterly disconcerted, turned upon her son, and began to ask him what he had been about.

The boy explained, in the midst of sobs and tears, that his whole crime had consisted in lighting the end of a stick in the fire, and twirling it so as to make rings of fire in the air.

During this conversation, Mistress Jebb had plucked up heart, and was just about to open her mouth in defence of her oppressed child, when the stranger interrupted her.

The church clock struck nine.

"Nine o'clock," said he, looking at his watch; "and that brat not in bed yet. Go and put him to bed this moment."

At these terrible words, the child, who had taken refuge in his mother's lap, burst out into still louder sobs, and Mistress Jebb, whose heart bled for him, was on the point of resisting; but a glance from the man in black took away all her courage, and venting her ill-humour upon her son, she shook him roughly, and shoved him out at the door, towards which the stranger imperiously pointed.

She was just about to shut it behind her, when he called her back.

"Here," said he, pulling a shirt and a pair of stockings out of his pocket. "Here, carry these to my room."

Amazement had deprived Mistress Jebb of speech, but still greater amazement restored it to her.

"Your room!—what room?"—"The best you have.—Make my bed, and take care that the sheets be well-aired."

This time she thought she must be dreaming. She mechanically took the things that were offered to her, and, unable to collect her thoughts, she left the room without attempting a reply.

CHAPTER III.

TISDAL, who was just coming in, met her in the passage. The child was in tears, and the mother all aghast.

"What is the matter?" said he.—"Oh sir, there you are at last;—come in."



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"What is the matter?"—"What's the matter, sir? The devil is here!"

"The devil?"—"Yes, sir, the devil! saying your presence. The devil himself—unless it's my Lord the Archbishop."

"The Archbishop!"—"Yes, sir! Here's his shirt."

"His shirt?"—"Yes, sir, and his stockings."

"His stockings! whose stockings?"—"Your master's!"

"My master?"—"Yes, your master. He says he is, and he proves it too; for he has turned the house topsyturvy. He has drunk your wine and asked himself to supper, and beaten Daniel and sent him to bed, and he's going to sleep here—"

"What nonsense are you talking?"—"Yes, sir! he is going to sleep here, and in the best room, too."

"Come, come, Mistress Jebb, is this a joke, or are you crazy?"

"Crazy, indeed;—it's enough to drive one crazy. But only go into the parlour, and you'll see whether I'm crazy or no."

From this chaos Tisdal gathered one thing; that a guest had arrived, who was taking strange liberties in his house. He accordingly followed his housekeeper's advice, and went into the parlour, where he found a man installed at his table, and so thoroughly installed, that he did not even take the trouble to look who was coming in.

The stranger held the newspaper in his hand, and might possibly be absorbed in it. Tisdal coughed and shut the door loudly; but this had no other effect than that of disappointing Mistress Jebb, who thus found herself excluded from the conference. As to the stranger, he remained motionless. Hereupon Tisdal advanced a few steps, and said in an agitated voice: "Will you tell me, Sir, whom I have the honour to receive?"

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said the stranger, without rising, and barely turning his head to look round. "You are the Curate of Laracor?"—"Yes, Sir."

"And your name is..."—"Tisdal."

"Oh! pray be seated."

The invitation was a strange one. Instead of complying, Tisdal repeated his question:—"I have told you my

name, Sir, may I be favoured with yours?" "Doctor Swift, your Vicar; sit down."

Though fully alive to the arrogance of this proceeding, Tisdal did not think it right to refuse this mark of deference to his superior. He sat down; and while doing so, he closely scrutinised his strange interlocutor. Judging by his profile, he was from five-and-thirty to forty, tall, robust, with regular, but manly, strongly marked features, corresponding with the haughty and abrupt tone in which he spoke.

Tisdal's scrutiny was suddenly interrupted by the object of it.

"You had views of your own upon this living?" said Swift.

"His Lordship the Bishop of the diocese, who is kind enough to interest himself on my behalf, had given me hopes."

"Which he has not realised.—They are all alike.—But you, too, are in fault. You did not set rightly to work; you have been too quiet about it. You should have done as I do—make yourself feared. Lord Berkeley would have liked nothing better than to feed me with fine words; but I am not so easily gulled. When people give themselves airs of protection with me, their actions must correspond with their words. He broke his word with me; but I told him my mind, and turned my back upon him, whereupon he made up to me, and thus I got the living upon which you reckoned. Let this be a lesson to you, if you don't want to starve all the days of your life as a country Curate."

More and more hurt by this harsh and cutting tone, Tisdal thought it better to hold his tongue.

"Well," said the new Vicar, still in the same posture; "I have given you all this good advice, won't you give me some in return? Come now!—I should be glad of some information as to the inhabitants of this parish. It seems that you are a favourite here, Doctor Tisdal, and that the folks are very sorry not to have you as their Vicar. It seems, too, that the people here have warm hearts and hot heads. This is all very much to your honour, Doctor, provided your popularity has not been

gained by 'the sacrifice of that authority of which you ought to be the faithful guardian, and provided these marks of sympathy are not a mere pretext for insubordination. Do you often preach !"—"Yes, Sir."

"And what do you preach ? The injustice of prejudice, for instance—the danger of judging from appearances—the respect due to superiors ?"

Though unable to guess the allusions contained in these sardonic questions, Tisdal clearly saw that he was suspected of something. Innocent as he was, he turned pale, and replied with a warmth very foreign to his nature : "Yes, Sir, I generally insist most strongly on all those duties which are most difficult to perform."

He had scarcely uttered these words when, ashamed of having given way to his temper, he blushed scarlet. He was angry with himself for having gone too far. But his answer had an effect very different from what he expected. Swift, who until now had spoken to him over his shoulder with an air of marked contempt, turned suddenly round, and looked him full in the face with silent attention. Then completely changing his manner and language, said to him : "Don't you think me a great brute ?"

Thus apostrophised, Tisdal at first remained aghast with astonishment ; but soon recovering his self-possession, he said : "Sir, to the best of my ability, I preach by example, and I make a point of judging no one from appearances."

"Nay, that is going too far, Mr. Tisdal. There are appearances which never deceive. For instance, yourself. I have only to look at you to be certain that you are the most honest and upright man I ever met."

While he spoke, Swift rose from his seat ; Tisdal did the same.

"You must excuse me, Sir, if I tell you that your judgments appear to me hasty and extreme ; and that I cannot understand how I can have deserved from you such praise, and such sarcasm in a breath."

"I was prejudiced, Mr. Tisdal—most unjustly prejudiced—against you. I had heard false reports."—"Reports!"

"Lies, Sir, as far as you are concerned at least. You

are thoroughly justified in my eyes; and it is now my turn to justify myself to you. I owe you an explanation of my conduct. Life, Mr. Tisdal, has often been likened to a battle, and there are moments even in our peaceful career, when we may compare ourselves to Generals in action. I had taken the field against you, and, assisted by Lord Berkeley, I won the victory. I had only to learn what sort of reception I was likely to meet with in the conquered country of which I was about to take possession. I sent emissaries to inquire, and what did I learn? That an unexampled reception had been prepared for me—that the population intended to meet me, and to welcome me to my new dominions with a flourish of trumpets, and with choral dances, like those of the ancient festivals.”

“My dear Sir, who could have told you such absurd tales?”—“They are no tales, Mr. Tisdal. There was even an idea of raising a triumphal arch in my honour. For in coming hither, I saw along the road, here and there, supplies of stones which could be intended for no other purpose.”

“I begin to understand you, Sir. But all that has been told you is too odious to be possible; and the best proof of the falsehood of these reports is, that this is the first word I have heard on the subject—if, indeed, you do me the honour to believe what I say.”

“I believe you, Mr. Tisdal, with all my heart. But your ignorance of what is going on only proves two things: your own perfect innocence, and the penetration of the conspirators. It is clear that they were far too well acquainted with your character to take you into their confidence. They prepared a surprise for us both. As for me, sensible as I am of the honour designed me, I preferred escaping an ovation little suited to the humble station of a parish priest, and I therefore came this evening incognito and on foot, rather than in Lord Berkeley’s coach to-morrow.”

“You seem so sure of your fact, Sir, that I can no longer contradict you; but, in truth, all you tell me sounds like a dream.”

“And it will be but a dream, Mr. Tisdal, thanks to your loyal conduct. But before I knew you, before I saw

with my own eyes that you were incapable of joining in vulgar fooleries, hardly excusable in persons totally uneducated, I confess that I was not without suspicions, nor prepared blindly to believe that the only man whose interests were at stake, was likewise the only man who knew nothing of the conspiracy on foot. This, Mr. Tisdal, is the secret of my strange conduct. I was determined to face the storm, and to prove to my hostile parishioners that I was not easily intimidated. I, therefore, went straight to him whom I was led to look upon as the chief. Somewhat savage by nature, I purposely made myself more so. I have now to beg you to pardon my incivility, and the liberties I have taken in your house."

"You are in your own house, Sir; this is the parsonage, which I have only inhabited as the representative of your predecessor, who never resided at Laracor."

"An example I do not intend to follow. But I hope that my intention of settling here will make no change in your habits, and that nothing will prevent us from living under the same roof in perfect harmony, until the Bishop of Meath has found some place more worthy of your merit."

"I am much obliged to you, Sir; but this parish contains so few Protestants."

"I know that; but I have two other livings, and I must of necessity have an assistant. I hope, therefore, that you will do me the favour of acting as my Curate. Promise me this, or I shall believe that you bear me malice."

"I agree," said Tisdal, grasping the hand held out by Swift. "With such a man as you, ceremony is contemptible and out of place. I agree because I see that your suspicions, which were natural enough, have completely vanished; and I will not conceal from you, that the downright frankness of your conduct, if it hurt me at first, has since touched me to the heart."

While this explanation has been going on, Mistress Jebb had put her child to bed; and no longer able to restrain her curiosity, she made supper her pretext for returning to the parlour. She had reckoned upon Tisdal to avenge her upon the insolent intruder. She could

scarce believe her eyes when she saw the two enemies shaking each other by the hand.

"Is supper ready?" said Tisdal. "Put another plate, and bring it in."

Though balked of her revenge, Mistress Jebb hoped, at any rate, to satisfy her curiosity during supper. But she had no sooner put the plates upon the table, than the odious stranger caused her to be dismissed; and the manner in which the house was laid out, precluded all hope of listening at the door.

When they were alone, Tisdal begged Swift to repeat to him all that he knew of the details of the plot, in order that he might take measures to defeat it. He proposed to go that very evening to those whom he suspected of being the ringleaders, and to rebuke them seriously; but, with many thanks, Swift refused. This ridiculous plot, he observed, was dangerous only as a system of misunderstanding between two ecclesiastics, who ought to set an example of concord. Failing this, the rest must fall to the ground. The arrival of Swift incognito, deranged all the projects for the morrow; and the sight of the good understanding between the rivals must finally discourage the malcontents. It, therefore, appeared more politic to ignore their evil intentions, as vanity would lead them to persist in their schemes if they thought they were known.

Swift's arguments prevailed, and he enlivened the rest of the evening by a description of the manner in which he had frightened Mistress Jebb, desiring Tisdal not to deceive her. She would be sure to communicate her impressions to the village gossips, and thus from mouth to mouth they would reach all the inhabitants, and strike them with awe and respect. Only he entreated Tisdal not to take literally his order respecting the best room; but the latter assured him that his commands would be executed without causing the slightest inconvenience, seeing that although the former Vicar did not reside, he, as Curate, had thought it right to reserve for him the best room in the house.

Accordingly, Swift no longer scrupled to adhere to the orders he had given; and when Mistress Jebb came with a candle to conduct him to his chamber, partly from cal-

culation, and partly in jest, he amused himself by resuming his gruff voice and knitting his brows, while he asked her whether it really was the best room.

"The best in the house," answered Mistress Jebb, with an air of consternation.

CHAPTER IV.

EITHER from want of time, or fear of compromising herself, Mistress Jebb did not inform Coxe of the Vicar's arrival; and early the next morning he assembled the ringleaders of the conspiracy at the Cap and Bagpipes. He had still to give them his last instructions; and their zeal was one of those thirsty plants, which can scarcely be sufficiently watered. Accordingly, the whisky was flowing in torrents, and the enthusiasm of the party made the success of the undertaking appear highly probable, when some one came to inform Coxe that the Curate was waiting for him in the street.

"Don't make such a noise," said he, taking up his hat. "I'll be back soon; drink away, boys."

He hurried down stairs, and found the Curate; but not alone.

"Here is your clerk, Doctor," said Tisdal to the stranger who accompanied him. "Let me present him to you."

The new Vicar! what a disappointment.

Coxe concealed his vexation by a low bow.

"Roger," continued Tisdal, "the Doctor wishes to inspect the parish. You will come with us?"

Roger made a bow of acquiescence; but his comrades were drinking up-stairs at his expense, and he was seeking a pretext for returning to the tavern, to break up this useless and expensive assembly, when the drinkers, remembering only the second half of his recommendation, began to utter loud huzzas in honour of the plot, and its absent chief.

"What are those outcries?" asked Swift.

"Oh, nothing!" said Coxe, who had heard his own

name shouted; only some drunken fellows. What will you take first in your round?"—"The church," said Tisdal.

"This is the way," said Coxe to the Vicar, hurrying off before them.

During the course of their inspection, Tisdal perceived that Swift was active, firm, and just, able and willing to be useful. All his questions, as to the condition of the parish, and the improvements which might be made, were marked with that enlightened interest which goes to the bottom of things. But while promising his services, he seemed to fear lest people should be grateful for them, and to make it his business to nip any such feeling in the bud. Now, if this was a refinement of delicacy, it was far too subtle to be understood by peasants. This he ought to have felt; and indeed he seemed to feel it, but not to care. It appeared as if he had so high an opinion of his own strength, that he scorned to conciliate, and chose only to rule. Tisdal doubted whether this were part of his system of yesterday, or whether the system itself were merely an ingenious apology for an incorrigible fault.

Unable to solve these problems, Tisdal regretted that his manner was not more gentle. A little ease and graciousness could not have been called flattery. In order to supply the total want of this, he endeavoured from time to time to break into the conversation with some kind word which might conciliate both speakers, or to temper by a smile, a jest, or a lenient interpretation, what was abrupt and haughty in Swift's tone. But all his ingenious solicitude could not suffice to such a task.

Swift possessed one means of making himself agreeable to his parishioners, alike simple and efficacious: he was born in Ireland, and could speak Irish. Why should he not make himself known to them as a countryman? Why not speak to them in their own tongue? After vainly endeavouring to lead him to do so, Tisdal resolved to force him. Although he knew very little Irish himself, he began to talk it to a farmer, and to say things which he knew would rouse the susceptibility of Swift. His stratagem succeeded. Swift could not withstand the

wish of confuting him ; and, no doubt, in order to make himself amends for the concession, he was more ungracious than usual. But the impression was made, and Swift was proved to be an Irishman. It mattered not that he abused and contradicted those to whom he talked; they were enchanted and subdued. The sound of their own language was such music to their ears, that they quite forgot the sense of the words that were uttered.

By the end of the round of inspection, the prejudices of the parishioners against their new Vicar were almost entirely subdued, and the whole edifice of the plot crumbled into dust.

What a mortification for Coxe !—There was Tisdal, who basely left him in the lurch, affected disinterestedness, and went about canvassing for his rival. “ Pretty thanks one gets for devoting oneself to such people, for compromising oneself, and spending one’s money for them ! ”

Swift was no superficial man; and when he undertook a thing, never did it by halves. Hour after hour passed away, and the inspection still continued. Coxe could hardly contain himself. He was furious at Swift’s triumph, and at what he considered Tisdal’s treachery; and his disgust was increased by the reflection that all this time the cup was flowing at the tavern, and that every instant added to the floods of whisky that were being drunk at his expense, in vain, and worst of all, without him. A smaller matter than this would have sufficed to make the hot-headed parish clerk of Laracor lose all patience.

At last, after four hours of torture, he was set free, and hastened back to the unlucky Cat and Bagpipes. Alas ! his fears were but too well-founded. The condition in which he found his companions—the scattered noggins, the men under the table—told him plainly enough what must have been spent. He had no need to ask for the reckoning—he was sure to see that only too soon.

Like a good parson, Swift had begun by attending to the interests of his parish: when he had returned home and rested, he was able with a safe conscience to think a little of his own, and he agreed to Tisdal’s proposal of looking over the parsonage. While they were walking

in the garden, Swift inquired whether it would be difficult to hire a small house in the neighbourhood.

"Is not this large enough for you?" asked Tisdal, laughing.

"It is not for myself; it is for two persons of my acquaintance, who, partly for the sake of economy, and partly in order to be near me, intend to settle in Ireland."

"Laracor offers few resources. However..."

"I don't want them to live exactly at Laracor. They are women, and it would be more decorous that we should not be too near neighbours."—"I understand."

"Doctor! doctor!" said Swift, joking, "do not harbour evil thoughts, or suppose that there is any room for scandal. The ladies are unmarried, it is true; but the age, and above all, the person of the one may warrant her respectability, while the other is still a child. She is an orphan, whom the death of Sir William Temple has thrown upon my hands."

"Sir William Temple! King William's minister?"—"I was his secretary!"

"His works have been published by a person of your name. Can it be you?"—"Yes; I, myself!"

"Indeed! then you are an author. Several works that have made a great noise have been attributed to you. Is the report true?"

"Authors who don't put their names, Doctor, have good reasons for not doing so. The less reputation, the more independence."—"Forgive my indiscreet question."

"It would be indiscreet, Doctor, only if I were forced to answer it."

"And it is at Sir William Temple's house that you made acquaintance with this young orphan?" said Tisdal, in order to turn the conversation.

"Exactly so. She is the daughter of a humble companion, or rather of a friend of Lady Gifford's, Sir William's sister; and Sir William himself confided her to my care on his death-bed."

"And you were charitable enough to accept the legacy?"

"There is no charity in the case. In the first place, she is of no expense to me. Sir William has left her

enough to live upon, and then I have a weakness for the girl. I have known her ever since she was so little, and I used to amuse myself with giving her lessons, and playing the schoolmaster to her. When we were dispersed by Sir William's death, my ward, Esther Johnson, went to live with a friend of her family, a Mrs. Dingley, who also had a little income of her own. When I got the living at Laracor, I proposed to them to come and live with me in Ireland, where everything is much cheaper. They agreed, and as soon as I have found a dwelling for them, they will come."

With his usual readiness to oblige, Tisdal eagerly offered his services to Swift, and it was agreed that they were to set forth in search of a house next morning.

The weather favoured their plan. Though early in April, the day opened without rain or mist—a rare event in Ireland. The air was soft, the first buds began to appear, and the meadows, wet with dew, glistened in the sun. Innumerable little birds, twittering, fluttering, chasing one another through the hedges, dusting themselves in the sand, merry as school-boys on a holiday, enjoyed this brief interval of sunshine and warmth. Swift seemed to feel the influence of this cheerful scene. He was in high good humour. Tisdal felt thoroughly pleased with his walk, with the sun, the birds, his companion, and himself.

They saw several houses, but the first was too large, the second too small. This would have done if there had been a garden; that had a garden, but the house was ill laid out. In short, from one cause or another, twelve o'clock had struck, and they were no further advanced than when they had started.

But the weather had changed. The sun had only shown himself in the morning, in order to suck up the moisture from the earth; and he now began to restore what he had borrowed. What fell was less than rain, and more than mist. The country had lost its holiday look, and everything wore a gloomy aspect. The sky was lowering, and the leafless branches were blackened by the wet. The lively twittering in the trees, and the joyous *hide and seek* in the bushes, had ceased; our school-

boys had gone back to their lessons, and sat still and silent in their places.

Tisdal, seeing that they were near a farm which paid the chief part of the tithes to the living, proposed to Swift to breakfast there, observing that he might take a look at it, and get information as to the object of his present walk, which might save him many a weary step. After such a change in the weather, and a whole morning passed in walking, Tisdal no longer found it agreeable enough to wish to take a step more than was absolutely needful.

While breakfast was getting ready, Swift inspected the farm. Tisdal would much rather have rested awhile; but he thought himself bound by politeness to accompany Swift. Although Swift had not been the one to suggest the idea of breakfast, he nevertheless did ample justice to the meal prepared by the farmer's wife. But he ate with extraordinary rapidity; and they had scarce been seated five minutes, before he rose from the table, and said, looking out of the window, with his mouth full: "The weather continues dull and misty; but as it is very unlikely that we shall see the sun again to-day, we had better set out again. We are wet and dirty already; a little more or a little less rain and mud will make no difference. Besides this, it really is very fine weather for your odious Ireland, where it always rains.

Tindal had rested as well as the time would permit; he quitted his seat without more ado, and only delayed long enough to make himself master of the road they had to follow.

This road led them across the fields. They sank deep into the ploughed land, dragging many pounds of earth sticking to their feet. Tisdal, however, took courage, for they were approaching their destination. There could be no doubt of it, after the very exact description given by the farmer.

The house turned out to be large enough, clean, and well laid out; the garden was in good condition, and the price moderate. But Swift objected that the ground floor was not high enough above the earth, and that the bedroom of his ward would not look to the south.

It is vexatious to resume a task which one had thought

finished. But after all, Swift had to bear his share of the fatigue, and made no complaint: and, moreover, he underwent this fatigue of his own free will, in order to oblige others.

Tisdal reproached himself with want of courage, and quickened his pace.

"I see you are like me," said Swift, "you are fond of exercise. You are quite right; nothing on earth is so good for the health. Above all, it is an excellent cure for giddiness."

"Are you subject to that?"—"It is my disease; and it is only by dint of exercise that I keep it off."

Tisdal had imagined he was taking part in an act of kindness to others, and now he discovered that he was sharing a course of medicine. He felt discouraged.

"We are not lucky," said Swift; "which way shall we turn now?"

Tisdal inwardly thought that they might now return to Laracor; but he hesitated to say so, when he had the satisfaction of hearing Swift ask: "How many miles off is Laracor?"—"About three."

"Three miles," said Swift, looking at his watch; "we should get home very late for dinner. Since we have come so far, suppose we devote the whole day to this tiresome search. Let us dine somewhere, and we will only return to supper."

"As you please," said Tisdal, suppressing a sigh.

On being taken at his word, Tisdal proposed going to Trim, where they would have more chance of finding what they wanted, and which had the advantage of being on the road to Laracor.

Swift, who did not know the country so well as Tisdal, could but trust to his guide, and they bent their steps toward Trim. On entering the village, the indefatigable pedestrian was about to recommence his search after houses; but this last effort had exhausted Tisdal's strength, and he was completely drenched. He requested Swift to defer the search till after dinner.

When dinner was served, Tisdal was too tired to eat. Swift was entirely occupied with getting all the information he could from the landlord of the inn. As soon as

he had done this, he said to Tisdal: "Won't you eat anything more?"—"No; I am not hungry."

"Very well, then let us start—it is getting late."

The innkeeper's answers had given more hopes of success than even the farmer's; but Tisdal's belief was exhausted, and he only looked forward to night to end his sufferings. Nor was he altogether wrong. The houses mentioned by the innkeeper turned out to have a thousand faults, which Tisdal, it is true, never discovered; but then he was exhausted by fatigue. Swift, on the contrary, had the eye of an eagle. He was not to be dazzled by any specious advantages, or deceived by the persuasions of landlords.

"There is nothing to be found here," said he; "let us return to Laracor."

Tisdal breathed a fresh sigh, but this time it was one of relief.

"Only," said Swift, "we will not go home straight as the crow flies. There is no hour fixed for our return, let us make the most of the remaining daylight."

"If this is all out of kindness," thought Tisdal, "I cannot object; but if it is by way of regimen..."

Nevertheless, he was so disposed by nature to oblige others, and to sacrifice himself, that he had already banished this evil thought, when, on leaving Trim, they saw a small, comfortable-looking house, which was to let, although it was not in the list given to them by the innkeeper. Heaven had rewarded him for his resignation.

All the objections made by Swift against the other houses seemed here to be foreseen. The bedrooms looked to the south, no traces of damp were to be seen in the rooms on the ground floor. There was a poultry-yard, a flower-garden, an orchard, a kitchen-garden—all certainly small, but very complete, well kept, and in full bearing.

Nevertheless, Swift would not decide. He walked about the house, went from the house into the garden, and from the garden into the house, cross-questioned the landlord, made a thousand objections, and entered into every sort of detail as to the nature of every tree, bush, flower, and vegetable. Tisdal's patience was fairly ex-

hausted. For three dreary quarters of an hour, he had followed in their rear, stopped and walked when they did, walked round the garden twenty times, gone up and down stairs, until he was out of breath, and he saw fresh difficulties arise at every moment.

"Decidedly," said he to himself, "this is no longer done to oblige, this is mere fidget."

At length, having exhausted the whole range of questions, Swift, greatly to the relief of his companion, admitted that the house would do.

"What is the rent?" he asked.—"Twelve shillings a week."

"We are lost!" muttered Tisdal.

Swift had already refused to pay this sum elsewhere, with great outcries.

"Twelve shillings!" he accordingly exclaimed, "then I need talk no more about it." And he walked towards the door.

"I am sorry for it," said the landlord, following him.

Now, on the one hand, the house suited Swift perfectly; on the other, it had been to be let a long time; and the two antagonists soon slackened their pace, and began to discuss the rent as they walked along. The one boasted of his property, while the other depreciated it; facts were asserted and contradicted; and as it was necessary to verify them on the spot, they returned to the house. At length, by dint of eloquence and perseverance, of stopping at every door, and at every turn in the passage, all the time on his legs, and Tisdal all the time behind him, Swift beat the landlord down three shillings. But he had taken it into his head to give only eight, and upon this, spite of all the landlord's refusals and protestations, he firmly insisted.

Tisdal was far indeed from being rich, but he longed to offer to make up the difference out of his own pocket.

"I must say," said he to himself, "that is not what I call obliging. A man can scarce have so much economy for others without being somewhat avaricious himself."

While Tisdal, charitable though he was, could not refrain from these thoughts; Swift had fairly wearied the landlord, and gained the victory, and the latter had gone

up-stairs to fetch ink and paper, in order to write the agreement.

"Well," said Swift, rubbing his hands, "should not I have been a good trader?"

"Excellent," said Tisdal; "and then one is the more zealous when one has other people's interests to defend."

He could not bear to entertain a bad opinion of any one, and he said this in order to give Swift an opportunity of justifying himself. But the latter would not avail himself of it.

"Why so?" he answered abruptly. "Do you think I should not have done the same for myself? You are very much mistaken. I like much better to keep my money in my own pocket, than to put it in that of a rascal who wants to sell me a thing beyond its value."—"No doubt, with a narrow income..."

"Narrow or no—whatever one's fortune may be, one must be a triple fool not to know how to spend it usefully and agreeably. And then I detest those people who, from laziness, false shame, or vanity, suffer themselves to be robbed, rather than defend their rights. It is by their false generosity that roguery is encouraged."

"A miser's maxim," thought Tisdal.

The landlord came down again, and the drawing up of the agreement gave rise to fresh disputes. Tisdal, wearied and disgusted, sat down at the other end of the room, by a window which looked into the garden. The sky had cleared, and he tried to divert his thoughts from this irritating controversy, by watching the effects of the setting sun against the clouds.

On a sudden, Swift, who spoke very loud, lowered his voice, and Tisdal's attention, which had been lulled by the voice, was roused, and he heard him stop the landlord's hand, and desire him to write four shillings instead of eight in the agreement.

"What, sir! four shillings? But the bargain was for eight."

"Hush!—upon this paper it must be four. The other four will be the subject of a private agreement between you and me. I have greatly exceeded my commission."

Your house tempted me to an extravagance, and it is fair that I should pay for it."

Tisdal could scarce refrain from falling upon Swift's neck, and begging him to forgive his unjust suspicions. This, then, was the man whom he had accused of avarice and fidget, because he stoutly defended the interests of his ward. How he now respected his determination and exactness; while he accused himself of selfish impatience, and of judging harshly and hastily.

Wearily as he trudged back to Laracor, he would not now confess, even to himself, that he was tired.

On reaching home, the first care of Tisdal was to change his clothes, the first care of Swift was to write to his friends that he had found them a house, and that he hoped they would come as soon as possible.

Tisdal now looked upon himself as decidedly selfish.

During the whole evening, Swift was in riotous spirits. He was delighted at the thought of seeing his ward—his spoilt child, as he called her. The notion of a spoilt child was not particularly inviting to Tisdal. He had had quite enough of his housekeeper's son, and he would have been better pleased, that the young orphan should be less of a child and less spoilt. But, admonished by his reproachful conscience, he endeavoured to sympathise with the paternal longings of his new friend.

Next morning, before Tisdal woke, Swift was gone to Trim, whence he did not return until night. For the first time that year, Tisdal observed that the days were amazingly lengthened.

Next day Swift went to Dublin; he had a host of things to buy for the house at Trim, and would not be home till the following evening. Accordingly, he did not return till very late, and he spent the whole of the week on the road between Dublin and Trim.

Meanwhile, Tisdal's time hung heavy upon his hands. He reflected seriously upon the loneliness of his life, and began to feel quite ashamed of having no one to think about or to love, but himself.

At length Swift returned home, pale from fatigue. Tisdal, touched by such zealous friendship, was about to express his admiration of it, when Swift broke in upon him

with: "I know nothing more amusing than furnishing a house. Don't you like shopping? As for me, I could spend my life in running from shop to shop."

Tisdal relapsed into his doubts and hesitations. He was like those pilgrims who travel to Jerusalem, advancing two steps and receding one. In spite, however, of the frequent checks it received, his sympathy for Swift on the whole made rapid progress. He had not yet had time to become accustomed to the society of his Vicar, but absence increased his desire for it, and he was annoyed at Swift's continual journeys.

He began to think that the spoilt child was a long time coming.

At last Swift received a letter, fixing the day on which the two ladies were to arrive, and he proposed to the young Curate to go with him to meet them at Dublin, and thence to accompany them to Trim.

The wind had been fair, and the packet had made the passage in an unusually short time. And when they left the coach, they found that the travellers were already at the custom-house. Swift ran thither at a pace which Tisdal could scarcely keep up with. But what was the surprise of the latter, when instead of the spoilt child he had expected, he beheld a handsome girl of sixteen or seventeen, who began to clap her hands with delight the moment she saw Swift.

"Beck! Beck! here's Presto," cried she to a little woman of five-and-forty, who was squatted on the ground busy fastening a trunk.

And skipping lightly as a bird, she was folded in Swift's arms in the twinkling of an eye.

"Good day, Madam Stella; good day," said he, pressing her tenderly to his heart.

Beck! Presto! Stella!—Tisdal looked at Swift to make sure that it was really he.

"How now, young woman; are not you coming to give me a kiss?" said Swift to the little woman squatting by the trunks; who was making vehement efforts to release from the lock a key that was tied round her neck.

"Here I am, Doctor," said she, having at length got herself free; and offered her lips to Swift, who received

her advances with far less effusion than those of her friend.

This circumstance did not strike Tisdal, or if it did, it by no means surprised him.

In the first place, the *young woman* was not Swift's ward; and in the second, she had great pale blue prominent eyes, no eyebrows, and a nose much too short, above a mouth much too wide. It is true, that spite her five-and-forty years, her complexion was dazzling. But with such features, what lamentable waste of lilies and roses!

"Now then, Madam Stella," said Swift, taking his ward by both hands, "come here and let me look at you. God bless me! why you've grown again. Do you know that it is time I should treat you with less familiarity?"

"How cross you are," said she, with a little pout, which Tisdal thought the most charming thing in the world.

"Well! well! never mind; grow as tall and as handsome as you please. You shall always be Presto's spoilt child."

After kissing her hands twenty times, Swift recollected his companion. Tisdal had discreetly kept in the background during the meeting, and in their delight the two ladies had not observed him.

"Where are you, Doctor?" said Swift. Come here, and let me present you to Madam Dinglibus, Rebecca Dinglibus, a rich young heiress, who taking pity upon the distress of Ireland, deigns to settle here and spend her revenues among us."

Mrs. Dingley was accustomed to Swift's ways, and she made no answer, but contented herself with assuming an air of dignity, and throwing more solemnity than usual into her curtsy, in order to do away with the effects of the joke in the eyes of the stranger.

"As to this little rogue," resumed Swift, giving his ward a pat on the cheek, which made nobody blush but Tisdal, "perhaps she'll tell you that her name is Esther Johnson, but don't you believe her, Doctor; her name is Stella, and if she dares maintain the contrary, Presto will renounce her, Presto will not make another verse for her."

Thus two of the names which had excited Tisdal's

curiosity were explained. Beck, was the diminutive of Rebecca, and Stella, a poetical name given by Swift to Mrs. Johnson,* according to the fashion of the time. But Presto! could that, too, be a poetical name? He ventured to ask Swift.

"I was christened Presto," said Swift, "by the Duchess of Shrewsbury, who is an Italian, and who, as she does not speak English, found it more convenient to translate my name into her own language. And, in order to repay me for making her known to posterity, under a splendid name, this little sauce-box has given me the nickname."

Esther was standing, and Tisdal offered her a chair; and choosing the first common-place question that occurred to him, in order to enter into conversation, he asked her whether she was not very tired after her journey.

"Oh, yes, vastly tired," said she, sinking into the chair with a deep sigh. But she merely bounded off it, and was on her feet again in a moment.

Tisdal's common-place question called forth, from Mrs. Dingley, a host of analogous answers, concerning the tribulations of the journey and the various causes of fatigue. While assenting to this tedious narrative, Esther flatly contradicted it by her behaviour. She perpetually walked about the room, and kept alternately raising herself on tiptoe, like a dancer, and curtseying low to make a cheese with her gown.

Swift watched her with delight.

"If you have done with the custom-house," said he, to Mrs. Dingley, "let's go. The only way to make this little girl rest herself is to put her into the coach."

"What is the name of the place we are going to?" asked Esther, as soon as they were seated in the coach. "Trim."

"And Laracor is close by, is it not?"—"It's a mile off."

"A mile! as much as that? That is too bad, Presto! Fie, Sir! are not you ashamed of yourself? I understand you've taken a house for us there that you may have an excuse for not coming to see us. But so much the worse for you, Sir. I won't hear any such excuses—not

* I need hardly remind my readers, that in Swift's time Miss was only used as a name of reproach.—TRANSLATOR.

I. I am determined to see you every day. Do you hear me, Sir? every day; and when you are forced to stay at home, when you have business, or when you have your nasty giddiness, then Stella will go to Laracor with Beck. But I'm angry with you all the same. It will be very disagreeable in bad weather."

"The Doctor knows what he is about, my dear," said Mrs. Dingley, taking the part of Swift, who smiled, but made no answer. "It would not be proper..."

She could not finish her sentence.

"Oh, what a pretty bird!" cried Esther. "Do look, Presto. Is it true, that you have no nightingales in Ireland?"

"What is that to you, child? Nightingales don't sing in the day time, and I hope that you sleep o' nights."

The trifling of Swift and his ward shortened the journey. On arriving at Trim, curiosity was stronger than fatigue, and the ladies desired to examine their house thoroughly. Tisdal could hardly recognise it, so well had Swift turned the time and his journeys to account in embellishing it. He knew all the tastes and habits of his friends, and had endeavoured to prevent their slightest wishes.

The garden above all enchanted them. They had not had one in England.

"How delightful at last to live in the country!" exclaimed Mrs. Dingley, though there were walls on every side. "How much more freely one breathes here: it was high time for me to come, for if I had lived much longer in town, I am sure I should have fallen sick."

Each had her preference. Esther liked the flower-garden, which contained all the flowers she was fondest of: at any rate in prospect. Mrs. Dingley, like a more reasonable woman, gave the palm to the kitchen-garden. But when they discovered that they had a poultry-yard, they were in perfect ecstasy.

"Well," said Swift, whose eyes sparkled with pleasure, "is not Presto a good steward?"

"Excellent!" said Mrs. Dingley.

"Poor Presto!" said Stella, "how much trouble he must have had!"

"He!" said Swift, "he had his own interests at heart. He is a glutton, and wants you to be able to give him nice little dinners."

"Yes! yes!" cried Esther, "that will be charming, Beck. I will take care of the poultry-yard: I will feed you, my friends," said she to two turkeys, which came up to her evidently with that hope.

At that moment, however, they got nothing from her but a low curtsey.

"And I," said Mrs. Dingley, "will undertake the management of the kitchen-garden."

"So you shall," said Esther; "and Presto shall judge who has managed best."

"Presto will judge, seated at table, and assisted by his colleague, Doctor Tisdal," said Swift; "and as it is not far from Trim to Laracor, if the dinner is bad, they will go home to complain to Mistress Jebb, and ask her to make them amends."

"And pray who is this Mistress Jebb?" said Mrs. Dingley.

"Mistress Jebb is Doctor Tisdal's housekeeper; and the dinner, which is now announced, would most likely have been much better, if she had been here to cook it. But now to dinner—to dinner."

So saying he took Esther round the waist, while Tisdal, more ceremoniously, offered his hand to Mrs. Dingley.

"And what have we been about during my absence, Madam Stella?" said Swift, towards the end of dinner. "Have we been hard at work?"

"If I must tell the truth," answered she, with the little pout which had already enchanted Tisdal, "I don't think I have been very good, but it is no fault of mine; when Presto is not there to give me my lesson, it is so tiresome to study."

"Well, we will make up for lost time; we will let that idle creature Dingley play at cards and..."

"I can play at cards too!" Stella interposed, with a triumphant air.

"Aha!"—"Yes, I know ombre, and whist, and picquet, and..."

"The devil you do! and you told me you had learnt

nothing! I need not ask to whom you are indebted for all this learning, child."

"To Beck. Since you left us we have spent all our evenings at cards."

"And some of your mornings too, I suppose?" "Oh, yes; on rainy days: it is so amusing. You and I will play cards, won't we?"

"To be sure; of an evening Presto and Stella will play, but in the morning they will work together; they will read good books and make extracts. Presto is a pedant, and Stella, who loves him, will do pedantry with him. In this hope, he has got a pretty little library..."

"For me!"

"For you, Madam Stella; come, come," said he, getting up from the table, "you have not yet seen all: I kept a surprise till the last for you."

"Come along," said Esther, passing her arm through Swift's; "I have it! I'll play at cards with Presto; and I shall win, and fill my purse; for I have a purse for my winnings."

"Poor Presto; what, all my savings go to fill Stella's purse? No, no, Presto is a close old hunk: Presto will play a deep game."

By this time they had reached the library.

"Oh, what prettily bound books!" exclaimed Esther.

"Are there any cookery-books?" asked Mrs. Dingley.

"Faith, Mrs. Dinglibus, you have hit upon a blot. I confess that I quite forgot them. There are religious and moral books, histories and poems, but cookery-books—well, 'tis an oversight; we will make it up."

"I've got some, I've got some!" said Mrs. Dingley: "and I will put mine into the shelves."

"Well, then, nothing will be wanting."

"Oh, what a pure good room for battledore and shuttlecock!" said Esther. "Suppose, Presto, we have a game?"

Certain of an affirmative answer, and without waiting for it, she ran to fetch the battledores.

"Look you," said Swift to his colleague, "we must not turn up our noses at battledore and shuttlecock. It is not often one has the luck to exercise one's arms."

Tisdal's surprise was extreme. How was it that this Lion had suffered itself to be tamed by a child?

While Tisdal stood wondering, Swift had already begun to play. Soon beaten, he gave up the battledore to Tisdal. The latter had played at battledore and shuttlecock a thousand times; but he never before had imagined it to be so amusing a game, and Esther was the first to stop.

CHAPTER V.

THE day passed so rapidly, that night had closed in when Swift and Tisdal returned to Laracor. During the walk home, the conversation turned upon the two ladies, more especially Mrs. Johnson.

Tisdal was in one of those moods in which we feel a need of confidence and sympathy; and the conversation having turned from Esther to women in general, he spoke with a warmth and freedom unusual to his reserved character. But beyond the reach of the white hand that bridled him, the Lion had resumed his fiery nature.

"Women!" said Swift; "yes, they are rather a pleasant amusement. It is as good a way as any of spending one's time when one has nothing better to do."

Tisdal's heart was swelling with the soft emotions of the day. He was deeply touched by Swift's kindness to his ward; and this answer jarred strangely upon his feelings.

"Indeed! and are women no more to you than that? Can you speak thus of those whom God has given us to gladden our lives, to be our companions, and the mothers of our children?"

"Doctor, you frighten me! Can you be thinking of getting married?"

"I do not understand how any one can be happy while living alone; and if I should be so fortunate as to love and be beloved..."

"You would marry. What, at your age and in your position?"

"Why not? My position, humble as it is, contents."

me; and I do not see why, because that affords me few means of enjoyment, I should, therefore, refuse myself all others. I desire nothing beyond the life I lead in the country, my books, the love of my wife, the affection of my children."

"Love! Beware: love is fleeting, and marriage eternal. Children! why you don't seem to know what children are. They are your heirs; and heirs to what! To your poverty, to your dependence, to all your privations, to your helot's condition—a pretty present, indeed, to make to your children: a fine compensation for the inevitable sufferings of existence is the necessity of struggling day by day with might and main, and for what? In order to prolong till the morrow the necessity for struggling again."

"Wealth is not happiness; and if my children take after me, and profit by my instructions, they will learn to find it in the moderation of their desires."

"The moderation of our desires is nothing more than the consciousness of our inability to satisfy them: our resignation is merely torpid despair. However, I am falling into the error of the moralist; I distort my ideas by dint of generalising them. Every man should speak for himself alone; for every one irresistibly follows the bent of his character. You love repose, and you give yourself up to it: I detest it, and fly from it. You are without ambition—much good may it do you: I have plenty—why should I deny it? If I feel able to put my shoulder to the wheel, why should I leave the task to men less able than myself? I have received certain qualities as a birthright. Am I to hide them under a bushel? neither enjoying them myself, nor making them useful to others. And having performed my task well, shall I not claim my hire? Without being rapacious, one may fairly wish to escape from that burthen upon life—that insufferable weight upon the spirits—that unjust, absurd, but no less real humiliation, called poverty. I do not choose that, in virtue of their guineas, scoundrels should be able to claim the right of treating me with contempt. I know very well that, beggar as I have been, I never put up with their impertinences; but some

insults are too subtle that one cannot repel them all at the moment. Besides, why condemn oneself to a life perpetually on the alert—to a constant state of irritation?”

“Thus, then, you never intend to marry?”

“Never is saying a great deal; men are such weather-cocks. It is possible that some day I may be fool enough to tire of a single life. But tired or not, I certainly will never marry until I have made my fortune. There is no better lesson to children than the sight of the folly of their father; and as mine did me the ill service of sending me naked into the world, at any rate his experience—the only patrimony he left me—shall not be lost upon me.”

“But with your aversion to marriage, how is it that you do not shun the society of women? Suppose love were to upset your prudent resolutions?”

“Love!—how absurd. Speak for yourself, my dear Doctor; such things belong to your age. But as for me, I am five-and-thirty; and as I have been able to preserve myself from that disease until now, I think I may flatter myself that I am safe from the contagion.”

Usually a difference of opinion leaves a slight coldness between two disputants, though perhaps only for a moment. But on this occasion, Tisdal felt the very reverse. Never had toleration been so easy to him, and he felt quite pleased that Swift’s feelings should be totally unlike his own.

“What a blockhead I am,” cried Swift, when they reached the parsonage: “I am to preach to-morrow, and I forgot to tell the ladies.”

“The neglect is easily repaired,” said Tisdal, “you know that to-morrow I am going to Trim to see the Bishop, and I will take the message for you.”

With this understanding, each withdrew to his chamber.

“Mistress Jebb,” said Tisdal to his housekeeper, “I must be at Trim to-morrow morning before nine, so please to wake me early.”

“Is it quite settled, Sir, that you are not to preach to-morrow?”

"Quite, Mrs. Jebb. You know very well that Swift is to preach."

Mistress Jebb shrugged her shoulders, and heaved a deep sigh. Tisdal was not aware how profound was the compassion with which he inspired her. But so it was and for the following reasons.

Since Swift's arrival, innumerable changes had taken place in the little household at the parsonage. As he had been reformed, encroachments had been resisted, and there was a complete revolution. The housekeeper had fallen from her high estate. She who formerly held undivided sway, now had to give in her accounts, to receive orders, and was desired to be silent if she took part in the conversation. What a terrible humiliation! But the power was established: she could not hope to shake off the yoke of the fierce innovator; and her resentment, repressed by fear, took the form of pity for Tisdal. Now that she no longer governed him, she beheld in him a slave and a victim, and every circumstance seemed to strengthen this preconceived idea. If he spoke a little less, or was not quite so hungry as usual, she thought that hidden sorrow was preying upon his vitals. She was convinced that he was growing thin; she dreamt that he no longer slept. Tisdal could not utter the mildest reproof in the gentlest voice that she did not say to herself, "Poor, dear man, how his temper is soured!"

In every parish of every country there is always a certain number of devotees in love with their pastor. For the most parts they are old maids, who have withered in single blessedness, whose hearts have inherited the ardour of their senses, and who, impelled by their chaste passion, and devoid of jealousy, seek one another's company, and cherish in common the sacred fire. Without knowing it, the young Curate of Laracor had, like other priests, his platonic seraglio.

In this conclave of holy women, whereof Mistress Jebb was the oracle, Tisdal's tyrant, as may easily be imagined, was not looked upon with a favourable eye. Do what he would, everything was interpreted against him. His taste for work, his zealous fulfilment of the duties of his station, showed a spirit of selfishness and intrigue. It was

all done on calculation. He wanted to annihilate Tisdal. His kindness to him was mere hypocrisy; he was civil to him because he wanted him; but, no doubt, as soon as he thoroughly knew the business of the parish—"your servant, Sir," he would say to him, "I'm paying you for doing nothing;" and he would give him warning. As to Tisdal's deference towards him, that was the strongest proof of his slavery; and all these pious hearts overflowed with prayers for the deliverance of Israel.

This knot of female malcontents had been joined by Coxe and his adherents. Since the mishap of the tavern, it was no longer ardour for Tisdal's interests that excited him; it was the desire for revenge. Not to mention the craving for disturbance, which never forsook him. He was far from sharing the illusions of the devout club, but he thought they might be turned to good account. Thanks to his activity, and his influence over the public opinion of the parish, the conspiracy was set on foot with increased vigour. A mine was skilfully and silently dug under Swift's feet, ready to spring at the first signal.

This signal Swift himself was destined to give. He was about to replace Tisdal in the pulpit, to put the finishing stroke to his oppression.

The indiscretion of Mistress Jebb, usually so discreet, very nearly upset the whole plot. She had just been at the conclave, where they had been declaiming against the usurpation of the Vicar, and bewailing the hard case of the Curate, robbed of all his rights one after another, and on the eve of being driven from the pulpit. They had not confined themselves to a barren sympathy, and great projects were entertained for the morrow. Without betraying these projects, Mistress Jebb, impelled by pity, could not withstand the wish to console the secret sorrows of her unhappy master by a few vague confidences. And when she had made him repeat that Swift was to preach: "Very well," said she, "he may preach. You are right, Sir; let him alone, and go to Trim. Folks don't always forget their absent friends. And he is greatly mistaken if he thinks he'll be admired."

"If so distinguished a preacher were not admired, it would be little to the credit of the taste of the parish."

"And suppose the parish likes better to have you? Every man to his taste. We are not ungrateful in this parish. And Mr. Swift had better go and preach his sermon at Dublin, we are not worthy of it at Laracor."

"What do you mean, Mistress Jebb? Is any fresh scandal in preparation?"

Mistress Jebb was excited, and with a little cunning Tisdal might have known all. But this rebuff put her on her guard.

She had spoken in an unguarded moment, but as he persisted in what she thought his habits of dissimulation, she determined to be more careful herself.

"What do I mean, Sir? I mean nothing. If anything of the sort were going on, you may suppose, Sir, I should be the last to hear of it."

"Why others can see as well as I, how much you dislike the Doctor."

"If I did dislike him, I should take care to say nothing to you, Sir, whom he has bewitched. I should let him fall into the trap."—"What trap?"

"Oh, none that I know of. I was only saying if it were so."

After asking her various questions, which had no other effect than that of making her draw back more and more, Tisdal sent her away, finding that he could get no more out of her. It was, however, clear that there was some mischief brewing; and he thought it his duty not to leave Laracor on the morrow. He accordingly tapped at the door of Swift, who had just got into bed.

"I have changed my mind," said Tisdal; "I shall not go to Trim. Will you excuse me from delivering your message?"

"Don't mention it. Nothing is easier than to send a messenger. Pray reach me that inkstand."

"With pleasure," said Tisdal, without moving; "but don't you think you had better let the ladies stay at home? On the day after their arrival they are sure to have so much to do in getting the house in order, and so much luggage to unpack."—"The luggage can wait."

"Well, but the fatigue of the journey."

"Fatigue! what fatigue? a quick passage in fine wea-

ther; they are not a bit fatigued. I know them well, and I tell you they will be delighted to see Laracor, and to hear my sermon; and I shall not be sorry to have them at my first appearance."

"It is just because it is your first appearance that..."

"Oh, my dear Sir, your kind solicitude makes you conceive my meaning too literally. I am no chicken, nor is it by any means my first appearance, except at Laracor; and unless they are better critics here..."

"On the contrary, it is because they are worse judges, and, above all, not so well disposed. You know what a prejudice there was against you, and..."

"And what?" said Swift, seeing that he hesitated,

"Why, suppose some good-for-nothing person were to take the opportunity..."

Before he could finish the sentence, Swift said: "Come, come, Doctor, this never would have come into your head unless it had been put there. What have you heard?"

"Nothing positive: most likely I am anxious without cause."

"Let us hear the facts. I am not a baby, so don't go on beating about the bush, and tell me, without more ado, plainly and roughly, after my own fashion, the terrible news you have got to communicate."

"My information is altogether uncertain, and this my only reason for hesitating to communicate it to you. Some foolish gossip led me to suspect that your discomfited enemies intend to take the opportunity of your sermon to revenge themselves, and I must own that it is on this account I resolved not to absent myself to-morrow."

"Thank you, Doctor, thank you," said Swift, grasping his hand; "but as you have changed your mind once for my sake, you will not, I hope, refuse to change it again at my request; and you will go to-morrow to visit your Bishop, and tell the ladies to come and hear me preach."

"Pray do not ask it of me. I can put off my visit till another day without inconvenience; and if any plot is to break out to-morrow, why should the ladies witness the scene?"

"What manner of plot can it be? A riot? Likely enough on the high road, but surely not in the Lord's

house! Doctor, you know the people of this country better than I do; do you think them likely to commit such an outrage?"

"Far be such a thought from me!"

"Well, then, what can they do? Hiss me?"—"The church is not a play-house."

"Besides, many a worthy fellow who has been hissed is alive and merry; and what can happen to me worse than that? Perhaps they will yawn, or go to sleep. Suppose they do; between ourselves, Doctor, has that never happened to us before? Besides, a man can't go to sleep at will—and if they do sleep—well, dear Doctor, happy is he who can lull his enemies to repose. Come, come, all this is not alarming enough to keep you here to defend me. Men are such cowards: only go, and I will warrant you no harm shall befall me; whereas, if you stay, it would look as I were afraid, and your hot-headed fellows would then stick at nothing."

"If you desire it, I will go; but you must grant me a favour in return—do not invite your ladies to come, a very little might frighten them."

"So be it: let them stay at Trim, as they have heard nothing of the matter. I won't refuse you a trifle when you obey me in the main. Good night, Doctor, don't let your friendly terror break your rest; I feel in the highest spirits myself, and, though far from a hero, I assure you that I shall sleep quite as sound as Alexander the Great before the battle of Arbela."

CHAPTER VI.

THE following morning Swift superintended Tisdal's departure, and when the proper time came, he went to the church. It was quite filled; not but what it could hold many more than the sixty Protestants of Laracor; but numbers of people had come from the neighbourhood, either curious to hear Swift's first sermon, or hoping to witness an uproar.

Whatever the cause may have been, the aspect of the congregation was calm and decorous. Swift began to read the prayers, and was listened to with edifying attention. He could not help smiling when he thought of the fears of his young colleague, and he congratulated himself at not having heeded them. But no sooner had he ended the prayers, and turned his steps towards the pulpit, than his hearers left their seats.

He ascended the steps, wondering within himself what they were about to do. But no sooner was he in the pulpit than his doubts were resolved: the congregation was going away.

This, then, was the plot contrived against him: it certainly was ingenious. Conspiracies usually fail, owing to the cowardice of their members. They promise their support, and at the decisive moment they run away. But in this case the victory could only be obtained by flight, and failure, therefore, seemed impossible.

What could he do? They were all walking out without hurry or disorder, with an air of pious abstraction, as if they had no idea that any one was going to preach, and as if, when the prayers were over, they had nothing to do but each man to return home. How was he to oppose this silent storm?

On the other hand, to leave the pulpit was to acknowledge himself beaten.

Meanwhile the crowd slowly dispersed. It was evident that the church would soon be empty, and Swift's situation had become very awkward.

In the reading-desk beneath him was Coxe, looking up at him with a roguish air.

How was he to get out of the scrape?

A thought struck him. He opened the Bible, and read in a firm and sonorous voice:

"And the Lord said: If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then will I spare all the place for their sakes."

The congregation turned their heads, to hear what he could be saying. The tide of departure was stopped, and only those went out who were on the very threshold, and too far off to hear his voice.

Swift continued reading :

"And Abraham answered and said : Behold no have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord which but dust and ashes :

"Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous ; wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five ? And He said, if I find there forty and five I will not destroy it."

The Vicar was reading the Bible, no doubt to make God a party to the insult offered to himself, and in the hope of thus retaining his congregation. But the trick was easily seen through—and at a sign from Coxe the sermon moved on again.

Swift was not discouraged :

"And he spake unto him yet again, and said : Peradventure there shall be forty found there ? And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake."

This was about the number that remained. Evidently these texts were not read by chance : they contained an allusion that was comically appropriate. There was a moment's hesitation, but Coxe was inexorable. He waved his hand, and the retreat continued, though more slowly.

The text Swift had chosen, contained a lesson of perseverance. He read on :

"And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak : Peradventure there shall be thirty found there ? And he said, I will not do it if I find thirty there."

A laugh, more of amusement than hostility, was heard among the crowd. But this time there was no hesitation. The people advanced towards the door with an even step. Coxe surveyed them with an air of proud satisfaction.

Any one but Swift would have given up the game : but he still kept pace, by reading the text, with the decrease in the number of his congregation.

"And he said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord : Peradventure there shall be twenty found there ? And He said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake."

"And he said : Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once : Peradventure ten shall be found there ! And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

Not more than ten remained, who were on the very threshold. Coxe was triumphant. Swift shut the book. Coxe rubbed his hands. But Swift would not yet acknowledge himself beaten.

"Abraham," said he, "went no further ; he dared not to try God's patience any more. But if I may venture to suppose the case mine ; that which he did not dare to do, I would have done, and I would have said to the Almighty : Peradventure five shall be found."

Swift had begun his sermon. Coxe stared, open-mouthed with astonishment. "Peradventure two only shall be found."

Close to the door Coxe espied the landlord of the Cat and Bagpipes. He tossed his head and looked up at the preacher, exulting in his victory over him.

"Perhaps there may be but one," and Swift, stretching forth his arm from the pulpit, pointed at him with his finger. Utterly aghast, Coxe turned quickly round again, drew his head between his shoulders, and held his elbows close to his sides, like a man who is expecting a chimney-pot to fall upon his head.

"And I feel assured that the answer of the Lord would still have been the same, that for the sake of one just man, of one single man faithful to his post, while all the rest forsook theirs..."

Coxe shrunk visibly.

"Of one single man inaccessible to the influence of evil example, of one man whose ears and heart remained open to the word of the Lord, God would have pardoned the guilty city."

The conspiritors had kept their word, they had all quitted the church, but the stragglers in the rear, wondering whether the parson would persist in preaching without a congregation, could not make up their minds to go away altogether, and remained standing in the porch. Those next in order, seeing them stop and turn round, in their turn did so too. By dint of stretching their necks

and pricking up their ears, those nearest the door heard the Vicar pretty well.

"What is he saying?" asked those in the second row, raising themselves on tiptoe.

A "hush," and wave of the hand were the only answer of the front rank, who did not wish to lose the thread of the discourse.

Finding that they got no further answer, the last comers pushed the others forward, and the latter readily obeyed the impulsion, which afforded them a decent pretext for getting near enough to hear so very odd a sermon.

This retrograde evolution had not taken place unobserved by the runaways who were already in the churchyard. Amazed at perceiving that people were going back into the church, they returned to see what could be the reason. The same wish made them in their turn push those who stood before; the same reason as before made these give way; and little by little the whole mass was gradually shoved forward, and the church filled again, while Swift immovable, and apparently unconscious of what was passing, went on with his sermon as follows:

"Yea, verily, a single just man sufficeth to redeem, may, to regenerate a whole people. For, if the spectacle of vice has power to corrupt, happily virtue likewise is contagious. By the force of example, one just man may convert his erring brother; these two just men may bring back into the right way five others; the five may bring back ten; the ten twenty; and why should not the twenty bring back thirty?—the thirty, forty?—the forty, fifty? Why indeed should not the whole people return one by one into the path of salvation?"

"Bravo! bravo!" shouted Coxé, forgetting all—the place in which he was, his schemes of revenge and his position as head of the conspiracy.

He jumped out of his desk, leaped over the benches, elbowed the crowd, and drove the people towards the eloquent preacher. But this was not enough for him. He ran out into the churchyard, gathered together men, women and children, and urging them with words and gestures, he drove them, whether they would or no, rating

and abusing them, higgledy-piggledy into the sacred edifice. Driven by so active a sheep-dog, the whole flock soon returned to its shepherd, and by the time Swift had ended his sermon, the church was full, and the congregation enthusiastic in its admiration of him.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS bold stroke at once rendered Swift popular in the neighbourhood. A long course of obscure services would not have done nearly so much for him: The people is everywhere fickle, enthusiastie, apt to rush into extremes, unable to divide its favours justly, and either giving or withholding altogether. This is more especially the case in Ireland. And in this respect, no one was ever more thoroughly a man of the people, or more thoroughly an Irishman, than Master Roger Coxe.

There are persons whose minds, like some animals, can only move by leaps. Coxe was one of these. He had no gradations of opinion. However, he was consistent enough in his inconsistency. For while he gave way by turns to the most opposite feelings—to affection or to hatred—the storm of his passions ever raged with equal violence; the only difference was the direction it took. He now became as violent a partisan of the new Vicar, as he had formerly been his determined foe; and he carried with him in his vortex, all the parish; with the exception of Mistress Jebb and her conclave of rusty old weathercocks, who were motionless on their pivots, spite of all the hurricanes in the world.

Tisdal was honestly delighted at this result. Envy had no place in his heart, and the disappointment of not having obtained the living of Laracor, was more than made up for to him by the happiness he felt in the society of Swift and his friends.

And, indeed, the intercourse between the two houses became more and more intimate and agreeable. Scarce a day passed that Swift did not go to Trim, and he seldom went without Tisdal. Ere long, too, Swift, when de-

tained by the duties of his calling, or absorbed in some literary labour, used to send Tisdal on before him to calm Stella's impatience, so that the young Curate more often acted as substitute for his Vicar at Trim than at Laracor.

Tisdal's modesty and reserve would never have allowed him to make his visits so frequent, but for this encouragement. But the ladies received him with such reproaches when he was too late, and kept him by such entreaties when he rose to go, that had he been ten times as modest as he was, he could not have failed to perceive the pleasure caused by his presence. And he ended by spending, without scruple, in their company, the many leisure hours left to him by the activity of his colleague.

As soon as he made his appearance, the two ladies struggled to get possession of him. Esther, in order to play at some game with him, and Dingley to get him to help her to work in the garden. Dingley was very fond of gardening, in theory, but in practice she lacked taste and patience. It was wonderful to see with what cunning she got possession of the good Doctor, and made him work for the benefit of her garden. Under her orders he was as good as a hired labourer, and she stood, with her hands in her pockets, making him plant and dig up, weed here, prune there, pick the caterpillars off the trees and the blight off the roses, roll the gravel walks, drag the wheel-barrow and water the garden. Such were Tisdal's usual recreations, the moment he arrived on foot from Laracor.

Obliging as the worthy Doctor was, it is scarcely to be supposed that this employment did not sometimes seem to him rather laborious, and that if he was to exert himself, he would not have preferred taking a walk in the fields with Mrs. Johnson, or playing a game of battledore and shuttlecock, to which he had taken such a liking. Still it was for Esther's friend that he worked, they were Esther's flowers that he watered; and then she sometimes came herself and made his task more easy by looking on. So long as the work lasted, there she was skipping about him, or standing like a young Ibis, motionless and upright on one leg, waiting until the pitiless Dingley, who exercised her despotism in the name of reason and the common

interest, would set free her prisoner, and allow the customary games to begin.

However, when Dingley could not be prevailed upon to give him up, and Esther saw that no slight cause would be sufficient to interrupt such useful labours, then she, too, put forth serious considerations. It was the chickens' dinner-time, and the Doctor must come and help her to feed her subjects.

Tisdal did not wait to be called twice; and throwing down the spade or the pruning-knife, he went with Esther to the poultry-yard. He liked so much to see her surrounded by her feathered people, to whom she distributed barley and bread. How they rushed to meet her! how they knew her voice! how they seemed to love her!

They would, indeed, have been most ungrateful if they had not been attached to her who cared for them so well. The first time that there had been a question of killing and eating one of them, she had raised loud outcries, and had always refused to authorise the sentence of death. In vain did the cook, in vain did Mrs. Dingley, use every argument in their power:—that the chickens were never kept with any other intention; that the poultry-yard was a very heavy expense, and a very unreasonable one, if nothing was to be got from it; that it was for Presto, who was coming to dinner:—she would listen to nothing; and on that day Presto had been obliged to content himself with vegetables. They had complained to him about it, but he spoilt her so, that he only laughed, and kissed her on the forehead. Accordingly they had been obliged to submit, and had no comfort except in deploring to each other that so many tender young fowls were growing old and tough, at so great an expense.

For anybody but Mrs. Dingley and the cook, who took the affair seriously to heart, this poultry-yard was really a comical spectacle. The fowls, gorged with food, were ridiculously fat. They walked majestically and with difficulty; and well aware of their own safety, they had become inconceivably familiar, saucy, and impudent. They looked upon the kitchen as their own. There they were, on the tables, on the chairs, in the cupboards; they stole the butter, they pecked the meat, they ate up everything

they could find; and then, when they were all crammed, they took a siesta in the chimney-corner.

The cook did not know which way to turn. In vain did she threaten them with her knife. A knife, in the eyes of these birds, innocent of ill, was merely an instrument which serves to cut bread, and they opened their beaks. If she attempted to drive them away with the duster, the hypocrites screeched as if they were being plucked alive, and Mrs. Johnson instantly rushed to the rescue.

"But, Ma'am, I cannot suffer myself to be eaten up by these thieves."—"Shut the door, then."

"But they come in at the window."—"Shut the window."

"That's right; I'm to be stifled," grumbled the cook. "In order to give the birds their freedom, I'm to be shut up in a cage. Besides, it takes the whole day to clean after them. Pretty chickens, truly! that nobody is to eat, and that have got names like Christians. What! am I to be their servant?"

She felt degraded and indignant. She abused the chickens for lazy brutes. But what matters abuse to those that do not even fear threats. They had a saucy air, that made her outrageous; and she was on the point of giving warning. But places were scarce, and Mrs. Dingley pitied her, and shared her vexation. This helped her to bear her troubles; and as it was necessary to buy poultry elsewhere, and as one ought never to lose an opportunity of pointing a moral, she took care to prove, by her accounts, the folly of giving way to Mrs. Johnson's childish whims.

Mrs. Dingley, on her part, consoled herself, and indulged her pride of housekeeping, by raising—thanks to Tisdal, and several large treatises on gardening—excellent tender vegetables, and asparagus unequalled in size and flavour: that was her triumph. While Swift was at Moor Park, with Sir William Temple, he had learnt from William III. to cut them in the Dutch fashion, and had communicated the royal receipt to Mrs. Dingley. Tisdal had no prejudices in the matter of horticulture, and cut the asparagus like a Dutchman.

Moreover, Swift had told Mrs. Dingley that the King ate the white part of the asparagus, as well as the head; and from that time forth, Mrs. Dingley never saw asparagus at table without repeating the anecdote, and urging her guests to follow the august example. Tisdal had an excellent set of teeth, and accordingly ate the whites of the asparagus.

But Swift, in his partiality for Stella, would not allow that the vegetable department was better conducted than the poultry-yard: he took delight in tormenting Dinglibus, and denying all her successes. The asparagus, he said, was stringy; the green peas too old; the French beans tasted like tares; the artichokes were overgrown thistles; in short, nothing escaped his censure.

Mrs. Dingley was used to Swift's sarcasms, and a few jokes more or less would not have discouraged her, had she been really fond of gardening; but the fact was, that she was bored by all things, and in all places. She had been pleased by the notion of living in the country only because she was tired of the town. She eagerly seized the first pretext for disgust; and as even the least ingenious persons are never at a loss how to gloss over their faults, she one fine morning found out the walls round her garden, and declared that such a place did not deserve to be called the country.

From that moment, the good Doctor's servitude was at an end. The garden was left to a hired labourer for two days in the month, and to Providence for the other twenty-eight; and the flowers got no more water, except what fell from heaven. Great indeed was the change in Dingley's kingdom. The strawberries ran over the gravel-walks like mad; the humble parsley shot up to the height of a couple of feet, and gave itself the airs of a shrub; the very asparagus—the royal asparagus—filled with guilty emulation, pointed towards the skies with their scarlet tops. Encouraged by the disorder, thistles, nettles, in short a whole host of parasites, took up their quarters in the beds. The rakes and spades were covered with rust—all was anarchy. The evil example of the poultry-yard had spread to the kitchen-garden; the vegetables also grew old and tough, and, like the fowls, were left to

die a natural death. Luckily, Trim was a market-town, and the cook well knew how to console herself.

Worse still, alas! there was no more getting up to hear the early songs of the birds; no more pleasant walks while the dew glistened on the fragrant hedges; no more gathering of violets or wild strawberries; no more wreaths of corn-flowers after walking in the fields. It was decided that they were not in the country. Esther's indolence required rousing, and Dingley had resumed her yawning, her laziness, her tired legs, her naps in the arm-chair—in short, all her town occupations.

In town or country, reading is a great resource. It is the least of all exertions, and the easiest of all pleasures; one that is always at hand. But with very little liveliness, Mrs. Dingley had still less seriousness of mind. Reading wearied her, and there was no book, however interesting, however amusing, or however frivolous, that did not send her to sleep.

One single book was an exception to this rule; the almanac of the famous John Partridge, the fashionable prophet of the day. This almanac and a pack of cards constituted the whole arsenal of arms with which she combated the time that hung heavy on her hands. If her pockets had been turned out at any hour, a pack of cards and an almanac would have been among the contents. The almanac was her serious employment; the cards were her favourite relaxation. She played games with them, she told fortunes with them; and when she was alone, she played at patience. It is almost needless to add that, taking advantage of the influence given her by her age, she had made it her business, by precept and example, to finish the education of her young friend; and that, thanks to so accomplished a teacher, and to her own natural talents, the young pupil, who had already distinguished herself in ombre and whist, had soon mastered the science of interpreting the knave of hearts and the queen of diamonds.

Swift's taste and calling, both led him to disapprove such amusements as these; and if Mrs. Dingley alone had given herself up to them, he would soon have found means to disgust her; but Stella was so young, and one can't

always play at battledore and shuttlecock! And when he took the cards to throw them into the fire, she cried so bitterly, that he could not help giving them her back again. But it would scarce have been giving them her back, if he had forbidden her to use them; and so, to console her for the grief he had caused her, he ended by letting her tell his fortune.

Tisdal, in theory, held the same opinion as Swift; but was no less indulgent in practice. Besides, to express any other feeling would have been a tacit censure on his superior; and following Swift's example, he submitted to all Mrs. Johnson's whims. She was such a pretty witch; so charming with her droll seriousness, and her inspired and solemn airs! So he cut the cards with his left hand, wished as many wishes as she bade him, thought of his lady love; and in return, she unfolded to him the secrets of futurity. He was soon to receive a letter which would puzzle him very much; he was to hear some news which would cause him both joy and sorrow, and certainly surprise him; he was to make a journey—in short, the whole rigmarole of the infallible predictions of drawing-room witchcraft.

Mrs. Dingley added what Esther had forgotten to say, that he was to fall in love with a dark lady.

Tisdal was very dark himself, and, according to the common opinion, should, therefore, have preferred fair beauties. However, he made no objection, and even asked if his love would be favourably received. But a fatal nine of clubs covered this part of his fate with an impenetrable veil, and the united science of the two sorceresses was unable to solve the question.

Tisdal was six-and-twenty; he had a tender heart, and had lived alone in the country. The Irish race is commonly handsome; but beauty is confined to certain districts, like hares and partridges, and Laracor was not much favoured in this respect. The young Curate was sincerely attached to his duty, and love in his mind involved the idea of marriage. Now, there was not a single girl in the neighbourhood whom he could both love and marry. The consequences of a daily intimacy between a man, whose heart thus hungered for love, and an enchant-

ing creature of seventeen, might easily have been foreseen. It was not long before he proved the truth of the cards, and all that remained to be done was to raise the veil thrown over the chances of his passion by the nine of clubs.

When he arrived at Trim, and Esther came skipping to meet him, and clung so close to him that she seemed drawn by an invincible attraction, indistinct hopes arose in his soul. But when Swift came in a few minutes later, she received him with the same eagerness; and Tisdal, falling from heaven to earth, was mortified and unhappy. He was angry with himself for having seen an especial distinction in a mere whimsical habit, or a trifling and ordinary salute. He reproached himself, as no one else would have reproached him, with presumption and conceit; but presently, if he heard Esther sigh, he could not refrain from looking earnestly into her eyes to read the secret of her sighing, to wonder whether it was the unconscious avowal of a heart new to love. At such moments, Mrs. Dingley's prediction came into his head, and it seemed to him not impossible that it might be a hint of encouragement.

Tisdal was handsome; his features were regular and delicate; but he was thin and narrow-shouldered, and there was something humble and feeble in his whole person. His mind was like his body; a thousand rare and excellent qualities were marred by a distrust of himself, which prevented others from esteeming him at his full value.

But none are more bold and aspiring in their thoughts than timid people; they thus privately make themselves amends for all they dare not do, and give way to their wildest fancies with the greater ease, as they are well aware, in their own secret hearts, that they will never realise any one of their schemes.

Tisdal's fancy, heated by these enchanting reveries, surmounted every obstacle. She must love him! he thought. A thousand trifling circumstances, a thousand airy nothings, crowded upon his memory, and proved it to him. Esther, with her infantine grace, her bird-like *gaiety*, her charming "little language," her large swim-

ming, startled eyes, her pouting and expressive lip,—Esther, like a heavenly vision, scarcely resting upon the earth,—Esther must be his! She must, she surely did love him!

But again, the very richness of the prize no longer allowed him to suppose it possible he could obtain it. Could so many perfections remain hidden in a village? Prodigal as Nature always is, she could scarcely have formed such a flower to waste its sweetness on the desert air.

But why should a union with him condemn her he loved to so obscure a fate? Why should not he struggle to raise himself to the position she was made to fill? God was his witness, that until now a very humble station had contented him, and that ambition would never have led him to despise it! But for Esther's sake he felt that he could even become ambitious. To him the path of ambition appeared thorny, and filled with hindrances and stumbling-blocks; but if each step he took in it was to bring him nearer to the goal, if each pearl that he fetched from the bottom of the gulf served to adorn her sable locks, how strong and resolute would he be.

Already he pictured to himself the realisation of these fancies; he beheld himself work, struggle, succeed. He attained wealth and honour. He gained possession of that adored hand. But no sooner had he awarded to himself the prize of his exertions, than by one of those sudden turns, so common in both night and day-dreams, his modest, simple tastes regained, unawares, the upper hand; and if he fancied himself happy in her company, in the peaceful enjoyment of the fruit of his exertions, the scene of his ideal felicity was never laid in the town, surrounded by splendour and luxury, but in a quiet valley in the country, by the side of a limpid stream, on a beautiful autumnal evening.

Time flew with lightning speed amidst these ups and downs of hope and fear; for though Tisdal, like all lovers, laid the most exaggerated interpretation upon Esther's most trifling words and actions, and passed in a moment from confidence to despondency, from excessive indulgence to Esther's failings to an equally excessive susceptibility

to them—ravished by a single glance, and in despair at a moment's silence—nevertheless he doated on his very sorrows, and preferred them a thousand times to the state of indifference in which he had lived hitherto. When he remembered that he had felt disappointed at not getting the living of Laracor, "How blind," cried he to himself, "are the wishes of men! How unfortunate should I have been had my desire been fulfilled!"

The principal circumstances foretold by the cards had long since been realised, and Tisdal was in love with a very pretty dark lady, when one of the lesser predictions likewise came true: he received a letter from the Bishop of Meath, requesting him to go and speak with him without delay.

The letter troubled him, for the Bishop usually wrote in a friendly tone, but this time his style was dry and short. Tisdal had no reason to suppose that his patron was incensed against him; but there are periods in life when the receipt of any letter whatever causes alarm, and Tisdal was precisely in one of those periods.

He was revelling in the first delights of love yet unavowed, of love heightened and embellished by all the powers of the fancy—those delights which lovers madly hasten to exchange for disappointment and satiety, the early and bitter fruits of reality. In this all lovers are alike, and Tisdal would have been no wiser than his fellows, had not his impatience been restrained by modesty. For fear of losing all, he dared desire nothing.

What could the Bishop have got to say in such haste? Tisdal only hoped it was not about a change of residence for him. A separation! Good heavens! Anything rather than that!

Tormented by this idea, and urged even more by anxiety than by obedience, he hurried off to Trim, and went straight to the episcopal Palace without so much as stopping to visit Mrs. Johnson.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Bishop of Meath was a fine stately old man, with *a severe and imposing* countenance. When Tisdal went

in, he did not ask him to sit down, and addressed him in an angry voice.

"Oh! there you are, Sir. Truly I hear pretty things of you. The conduct of the clergy at Laracor is exemplary. The Vicar keeps a mistress, and the Curate is complaisant enough to aid and abet him in the scandal."

This charge was so unexpected that Tisdal was quite stunned by the blow. "Doctor Swift!—a mistress!"

"You don't know her, perhaps? You never go to see her—eh?"

"Can your Lordship mean Mrs. Johnson?"

"I mean, Sir, the baggage, whom your Vicar has had the impudence to establish at Trim, under my very nose, and at whose house you spend all your time."

The Bishop seemed so sure of his fact, that Tisdal broke out in a cold sweat; he stood staring and aghast, and made no answer, while the Bishop watched him attentively. The Bishop had before him a jealous lover. He thought he beheld a priest ashamed of his sin, and Tisdal's silence, which he took for a confession, somewhat abated his resentment.

"At any rate," said he, in a softened tone, "I am glad to see that you have not learnt to lie."

This insulting commendation aroused Tisdal from his stupor.

"My Lord, you have been deceived! This is an atrocious calumny. Mrs. Johnson is the most honest woman in the world."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Bishop, impatiently.

"Yes, my Lord, I say the most honest," continued Tisdal, fiercely. "She!—good God! how infamous. Why she's a mere child."

"A child!" said the Bishop, astonished. "Of what age?"—"What age? Why—seventeen—at the outside."

"Seventeen; and you call that a child?"

"A child in character," answered Tisdal, hastily, and blushing scarlet. "She is candour and innocence itself."

"Yes, yes! we all know those innocent young ladies, and what is hidden under those childish manners."

"But, my Lord, she is not alone; she lives with a lady

who never leaves her."—"Not when you are there, I dare say."

"A lady who protects her like a mother; a lady of a respectable age."—"All go-betweens are of a respectable age."

"Oh! my Lord, Doctor Swift has enemies in the neighbourhood. You have been prejudiced against him. But I assure you..."

"Speak for yourself. In endeavouring to justify yourself, I hope you won't undertake the impossible task of whitewashing him. You may have been the dupe of this man's hypocrisy."

"He a hypocrite! My Lord, you don't know him. He lays himself open to calumny by the care with which he conceals his good qualities. He affects none but bad ones. Accuse him of cynicism if you will. But hypocrisy..."

"To be sure, cynicism is the hypocrisy of the present day. Vice has worn the mask of virtue till it has worn it out: and it can no longer deceive but by telling the truth. You're the only man that has not found this out. But, as the case stands, I like you the better for it. I see that you have been very innocently mixed up in this disgusting business."

Nothing but tenfold guilt could have made a man silently receive an absolution offered in such insulting terms.

"My Lord," replied Tisdal, feelingly, "at my age, and with my way of life, I do not pretend to deep knowledge of mankind; but I think I do know Doctor Swift. I have been living with him for several months, and I declare to you, that if he is a hypocrite, there must exist degrees of hypocrisy so profound that nothing short of your long experience could detect them; unless, indeed, one had the key in one's own heart."

"Or in undeniable proofs—in previous conduct; such as may serve to illustrate his present behaviour."

"Proofs, my Lord."

"I tell you what, my dear Sir, I am not aware of being a blockhead. Be so good as to believe that I

do not speak lightly, I have not sent for you to enlighten me as to the doings of Doctor Swift. I know well enough what to think of him. But knowing you, I did not understand how you could have taken part in his misconduct with your eyes open. I rejoice to find that appearances only were against you, and that if your conduct has been imprudent, your intentions at least were pure."

"My Lord, appearances may have misled you with regard to Doctor Swift, as well as myself, and in the name of truth I implore you..."

"There! there! that's enough. I know what I have to do. You are out of the question. Thank God for it, and hold your tongue. As to your virtuous Vicar, that is another affair, which has to be settled between him and me. Or hold: as you are so much his friend, I will enable you to serve him. If I listen only to my indignation, I should bring him before the Ecclesiastical Court. But the public always holds the whole body responsible for the faults of its members. The Catholics, by whom we are surrounded, and all the foes of the Church would rejoice in the scandal. These considerations incline me to indulgence, and I authorise you to inform Doctor Swift that I know all."—"Me, my Lord?"

"Yourself, and for his advantage. You will explain to him my motives for consenting to shut my eyes. I am going to London, where I shall stay some weeks. Let him during my absence amend his ways, and quietly send away those two women. On my return, let me find decency restored, and let there be no trace of an offence which I only wish to forget, if his conduct will allow me to do so. As for you, I need not add that you must never again enter the house of those creatures. Good morning."

Easily as this prohibition might have been foreseen, it filled the poor lover with consternation. But the Bishop was about to leave the room, and Tisdal made a last effort to avoid so delicate a commission. His objections only made the Bishop angry.

"Don't be afraid; you will not have to speak in your own name, but in mine."

"That is true, my Lord. But put yourself in my place. How can I accuse him point-blank without having any explanation to give?"

"I tell you you will be doing him a service, and, at the bottom of his heart, he will know that very well. If he asks you for any explanation, you have only to say that I know what happened at Kilroot."—"At Kilroot?"

"Yes, at Kilroot, in the diocese of O'Connor, where he was Vicar before he came here. He will know what that means: and I will answer for it that he will ask no further questions."

While saying these words the Bishop had opened the door, and shut it after him without another word.

When left alone, Tisdal stood motionless, his eyes fixed upon the door, and unable to collect his thoughts. At last the sound of a bell roused him from his stupor, and he left the Palace with despair in his heart.

CHAPTER IX.

TISDAL's way home led him past Mrs. Johnson's house. How his heart swelled when he caught sight of the walls! He had not the courage to go further, and he stood like Adam after the Fall, at the gates of Paradise.

There she was!—a few steps off—and he should not see her that day! nor to-morrow! nor the following days!—never, never more! She was lost to him!

Utterly disheartened, he sat down on a stone, absorbed in grief, with his face hidden in his hands.

Had he then been deceived! was this angel of purity a woman like so many others, a woman made up of frailties and hypocrisy! Whom, then, could he trust? Only seventeen, with such candour in her looks, such childlike simplicity in her tastes, and yet corrupt! How! so pure a surface, and so foul at bottom!

Tisdal had repelled these bitter thoughts in the presence of the Bishop; but, left to himself, all the arguments which he had combated returned to his mind, and assailed him with redoubled force. The assertions of the

prelate, the authority given them by his rank, his age, his experience, and the gravity of his character, and, still more than his direct assertions, his mysterious allusion to Kilroot, overthrew all the doubts, all the hopes of the wretched lover; and he cursed his credulity, he execrated Esther, Swift, and all mankind.

Night closed around him, and lights shone in the windows of the house. Two shadows, which he thought he recognised, moved behind a curtain. He felt the stabs of jealousy in his breast; he burst into tears, and, with an agonising effort, tore himself hastily from this painful scene.

He longed to reach home, to hide from every eye a grief which he could not avow. But he had scarce set foot in the vicarage, when he was pestered with questions by his housekeeper.

"Home already! and alone, too! How is this?"—"I am not well." In this he told the truth.

"I should think so," said Mistress Jebb, tartly. "Such a life as you lead: always on the road, and in all weathers too! There is no sense in it. You get heated—you catch a cold. Just the way to get a pleurisy. And how kind it is of your friend, Doctor Swift, to let you come home alone in such a condition! He might have come with you, at any rate."

"No, Mistress Jebb, I have not seen him. It was on leaving the Bishop that I felt so ill, and I came straight home."

Preparations for warming his bed, and brewing some old woman's remedy, saved Tisdal from further questions and reproaches. And he obtained the relief of being left alone, on condition of drinking the potion forced upon him.

Alone! but, alas! alone with his own thoughts: "How they had trifled with him—the traitors! They had seen his love, and encouraged it, in order to veil their own guilty intercourse. This, then, is the reward of sincerity! People trade upon the best feelings of your heart, and reward your confidence and affection with scorn and *perfidy*! Such is the world! Such are women! What a

bitter and hardening lesson! Ah! it were better still to be their dupe."

And between shame and anger, the blood rushed into his face. But soon a more familiar voice made itself heard in his soul.

"Unfortunate pair! They are glorying in their deceit, and lulled into security they sleep upon a volcano. They too will soon be aroused. Ah! I at least still have an untroubled conscience, while they How I pity them! Poor girl! At her age, without parents to guide her, how was she to keep herself from falling: how to withstand such powerful influences? She has fallen from excessive innocence. Yes, Swift alone is guilty. He has abused his power over her. The experience, the force of character on which he prides himself; thus, then, has he used them. He has seduced a child confided to his honour, he has worked upon her best feelings, he has taken advantage of her filial affection. Ah! he indeed deserves no mercy. But to ruin him is to ruin her also. I must not hesitate. I must prevent a collision between the Bishop and Swift."

To come to a determination is always a relief; more especially to a generous determination. Tisdal's good intentions somewhat cooled his blood scorched by fever, and his eyes closed from fatigue. But while we are awake, the brain has a certain command over its own ideas, whereas sleep gives it up to their uncontrolled power. No sooner had Tisdal fallen into a sort of lethargy, than all the spectres of memory seized upon him as a prey, and he spent the night in a state between sleeplessness and night-mare. He was discoursing with the Bishop; he warmly pleaded the cause of Esther and Swift; he had just convinced him by his eloquence, when all at once he heard a loud burst of laughter behind him; it was Swift and Esther, who were pointing at him the finger of scorn, who were laughing at him, in which they were joined even by the Bishop.

This dream, by which he was obstinately haunted all night, left a deep impression upon his mind; and when *he woke, he felt ill-disposed to execute the very ticklish*

commission with which the Bishop of Meath had charged him. His friends were treacherous and ungrateful. Why should he voluntarily place himself in their power, and continue to act the part of a dupe?

But such considerations could not long influence his unselfish soul, and he resolved to serve them at his own risk and peril. But when he found himself face to face with Swift, his heart failed him. Swift, if guilty, with his sort of character, would receive such a compliment very ill; if innocent, far worse. Such a warning, however well meant, was none the less offensive to the honour of his ward and to his own. And then how foolish he (Tisdal) would look. How could he have believed such a calumny; how was it that he had failed to refute it? Decidedly he thought that he must more ripely consider so serious a step; that, at all events, he must not speak until he had found means to temper the bitterness of the information he had to communicate, and he gave himself until evening to reflect.

Swift was going as usual to Trim.—“Will you be able to come?” asked he of Tisdal.

The latter excused himself on the plea of indisposition; and Swift commended his intention of staying at home, and exhorted him to keep very warm. While he thanked him for the advice, Tisdal thought within himself that Swift was in great haste to take him at his word; it was clear that they were delighted to be rid of him, and that he had been in the way more than once.

Swift was no sooner gone than Tisdal became indescribably agitated. Absence, which exaggerates everything, caused all the serpents of jealousy to hiss in his ears. He could not bear to remain in bed. Besides, he was not sorry that Swift should find him up. It would give him to understand that, had he expressed the least wish to that effect, Tisdal could very well have gone with him to Trim.

The contradictory ideas, the frantic hopes, the impossible schemes, which passed through his head during this long day, could not be enumerated; but his irritation had merely increased; and when Swift came home, Tisdal said *to himself, that at the end of four-and-twenty hours it*

was too late to open his heart to him; that such a delay, and the suspicions it implied, were an additional outrage, and that it was better to remain silent, so as to discover the truth, and to fashion his conduct accordingly.

But then the Bishop's commission. Had he not accepted it? The Bishop had not even given him time to refuse it. It was not too late to write now what he had been unable to say then, and if warned not to count upon his intervention, the Bishop would have no right to complain.

Tisdal had already settled this point, when he heard from Swift that the Bishop had left Trim that evening. This news gave him pleasure, for it relieved him from the necessity of action, and he was one of those who increase all their embarrassments by delay. It is true that he might have written to London, but he persuaded himself that it was of no use; that at such a distance, and during so short an absence, the Bishop would certainly not attend to the affairs of his diocese, and that it would do just as well to let him know his resolution on his return. Meanwhile, all that could be required of Tisdal was, that he should abstain from all intercourse with the ladies at Trim, and this duty he resolved scrupulously to fulfil.

Faithful to this plan, which he had found hard enough to form, he remained shut up at home, sad, tormented by cruel uncertainty, longing twenty times a day to go and throw himself at Esther's feet, to confess all to her, to entreat her forgiveness of his abominable suspicions; and the very next moment he was restrained by distrust, jealousy, and indignation, more than by the commands of the Bishop.

During the first week, he excused himself, on the plea of urgent business; and, indeed, in order to justify himself to his conscience, and to escape from the torture of his own thoughts, he worked as hard as a man, whose mind was so painfully occupied, could work. But, ere long, his efforts to fix his wandering attention, a hundred times more painful than the free indulgence of the thoughts he struggled to repel, combined with solitude and *the cruel pangs of absence*, threw him into such a deep *melancholy*, that he was perfectly enabled to replace the

stale excuse of work by the more true and more valid one of sickness.

So long as they had believed him to be busy, the ladies of Trim had left him to himself: they sent him polite messages of regret at his absence, and nothing further. But as soon as they heard of his illness, they became seriously uneasy; and not an evening passed that Swift did not bring back some medicine, warranted by Mrs. Dingley to work wonders, accompanied by the good wishes of both. At last, on finding that his illness continued, they could bear it no longer; and, on one fine morning, Tisdal was overwhelmed with surprise and emotion, on seeing Mrs. Johnson and her friend walk into his room.

"As you cannot come to us," they said, "we have come to you; and we shall do so every day until you are able to visit us again."

Tisdal was by no means prepared to see Mrs. Johnson; and the moment he beheld her, all his plans and all his suspicions vanished. He felt that she could not be guilty. One had only to look at her to be convinced of her innocence. He must surely have been mad to lend an ear to such calumnies! That the Bishop should have believed them was conceivable; he did not know her. But he—Tisdal—what unpardonable weakness! This was now his only subject of remorse.

Mrs. Dingley seated herself beside the sick man, and felt his pulse. He assured her that he was much better, and, accordingly, after some deliberation, she announced to him that he had no fever.

On the day after the next, finding that the ladies persisted in keeping him company, Tisdal declared that he felt able to go out, and that henceforth he would go to see them, a promise which was readily received, Dr. Dingley having decided that he was convalescent, and would be all the better for exercise.

On the following day, Tisdal, bound by his promise, and urged by his feelings, accompanied Swift to Trim. His love, sharpened by absence, grew more eager than ever, and from *that day* forth he resumed his former way of *life*.

Luckily the Bishop of Meath was in London, and knew not how his commands were disregarded. But how when the Bishop should return ! Oh, then Tisdal would go to him, and make a clean breast. He would confess his silence towards Swift, and the continuance of his visits to Trim ; and he would justify his disobedience by vindicating Esther's honour. This now seemed to him so easy. Surprise and agitation had stricken him dumb, and deprived him of all presence of mind ; but now that he had had time for reflection, that he had watched her—and watched her with jealous eyes—how easily he should be able to enlighten the Bishop, and to make him share his own convictions. How he rejoiced at having abstained from any explanation ; at having spared Swift such a humiliation, and himself so odious and ridiculous a task. How he exulted in his own discretion, in the invisible protection which he should extend over the object of his love ! How delightful to ward off from her causes for sorrow of which she was not aware, to render her services which she was never to know !

This bold resolve quieted his conscience ; and if the suspicions which had troubled his heart could but have vanished, and left no trace behind—if he had been able to defend himself against all the little fits of jealousy which the sight of Swift's caresses now awakened in him—he would, spite of his disobedience, have recovered his former calm and unclouded happiness.

One morning, on his road to Trim, he was overtaken by a coach. It was the Bishop of Meath, returning from his journey. Seeing Tisdal on the road, he imagined he must be going to the Palace, and made a sign to him, as he drove past, intimating that he should be glad to see him.

Tisdal's heart beat violently. Though he had constantly endeavoured to accustom himself to the idea of this meeting, he now felt far less courage for it than he had expected. What would the Bishop say when he learnt that his orders had been disregarded ? Tisdal's present terror now made him look upon his past fears as absurd. He bitterly repented of having said nothing to *Swift, and of having thought of undertaking his defence without consulting him upon the best manner of doing so.*

But it was impossible to recede. The Bishop was expecting him, and Swift was not even at Trim. Tisdal called to mind as he went all the irrefragable proofs which he had been hoarding up for the occasion, and he reached the Palace in tolerably good humour with himself. But whilst he ascended the stairs, his ideas forsook him: and when he found himself in the very chamber which recalled to him so painful a scene—when he looked upon the stern old man, whose displeasure he was about to encounter—his voice failed, and he perceived, with a terror which doubled his agitation, that he was quite unable to plead his cause.

Luckily the Bishop began to speak the moment he came in. "So you knew that I was coming back to-day. I am greatly pleased with your punctuality; 'tis a good sign. You have come, I presume, to give me an account of this unlucky affair. Well, I need hardly ask you if everything is settled."

The Bishop's tone was friendly; but as his graciousness was entirely owing to an allusion, it did not at all reassure Tisdal, who called up all the voice, and all the courage he could muster, to say: "My Lord, I am afraid you will think me much to blame, but do not condemn me without a hearing. I have not spoken to Doctor Swift."

"What!" cried the Bishop, striking his hand upon the table. "Then those women are still at Trim. The scandal still goes on?"

Tisdal had resolved to confess that he had continued his visits; but the Bishop was so angry that he thought it prudent to postpone this avowal until he should have succeeded in clearing Esther from the calumnies by which she had been blackened. This he endeavoured to do with all the energy and eloquence with which love inspired him. But the Bishop quickly interrupted him.

"Why, I've heard all that!—you repeated it to me twenty times before my departure. What is the use of so many words? You are talking nothing but nonsense. You think all the world is like yourself. I admit that this is not a crime; but what I do blame you for is, *having undertaken my commission when you had not the courage to discharge it.*"

Tisdal cast his eyes to the ground, and made no answer. His silence disarmed the Bishop.

"Well, it's partly my fault. I ought to have foreseen it. Besides, on second thoughts, it is just as well that you have said nothing. My indulgence was too great. Doctor Swift is old enough to understand his duties; and though one offence may be forgiven, when it is repeated, pity for the culprit becomes immoral and mischievous."

Tisdal perceived that his weakness had increased his Vicar's danger. He reproached himself for it, and wished to repair his error.

"I entreat your Lordship to hear me. It is not for me to advise you, and I do not altogether understand your meaning; but since the warning you gave me, I have thought it my duty narrowly to watch Doctor Swift, and I will answer for it with my head..."

"That he is not guilty?"—"Yes, my Lord."

"And will you answer for it with your head, Mr. Apologist, that he did not seduce the daughter of the Curate of Kilroot?"—"The daughter of the Curate?"

"And that he was not forced on that account to give up to the father the living he had just obtained for himself. Will you answer for that with your head?"

This revelation was overwhelming. Tisdal was thunder-struck. His legs trembled under him, and he was forced to lean on the back of an arm-chair.

The Bishop, seeing his condition, gave him time to recover.

"My Lord," cried Tisdal, as soon as he had recovered his speech, "take pity upon me, and procure me the means of leaving Laracor."

"You leave Laracor? It is for the Vicar to leave. Willy nilly, he shall go. But I believe that, after the conversation I shall have with him, he will not wait to be asked. He is used to giving up his livings. And he will prefer resigning Laracor, to having his conduct exposed."

"My Lord, I implore you to get me another curacy."

"You don't hear what I am saying. The living of *Laracor* will become vacant, and I have reason to hope *that this time I shall get it for you.* Lord Berkeley has

not been lucky enough in his choice to prevent some regard being paid this time to your claim and to my commendation."

"My Lord, I have no doubt of your power, and I know not how to thank you for your kindness; but you must excuse me. Laracor has become odious to me. I should find nothing there but sad recollections. For the sake of my peace of mind, I must leave it."

"How can you be so childish! What sad recollections? Because you've been the dupe of a libertine and a couple of artful baggages! It does you honour, and it is for them to be ashamed. But what is the matter? How now: in tears! What can have happened to you?"

Tisdal threw himself at the Bishop's feet.

"My Lord, you have shown me the kindness of a father. Suffer me to open my heart to you, to reveal all my weakness. I am very foolish, and I blush for what I have to say to you. But I must speak. That young woman," he resumed, after a moment's interruption, and in a voice broken by sobs, "that ward of Dr. Swift's—his mistress..."

He burst into tears. The Bishop raised him up, and held him by both hands.

"Well, my child, well! What is it? Calm yourself. Do not speak. Alas! without your speaking, I guess how it is: the syren has captivated you! Accursed creatures!—nothing is sacred to them. My poor friend, now I understand your position, and all that it cost you to believe her guilty and to warn her accomplice; and I understand your wish, your necessity for leaving Laracor."

"Yes, my Lord, let me go directly. Send me anywhere. If you but knew the extent of my weakness—if you knew that, in spite of your orders, I could not refrain from seeing her every day. Oh, my Lord! forgive me, and act for me with courage. You see that I am incapable of it myself."

"I see it, my son, I see it; and I will take immediate steps to remove you from a place which can but fill your mind with dangerous impressions. Come, do not be cast down. To whom can religion afford consolation if not to us? Love is like other diseases, it must have its course. *But you are too high-minded not to feel a contempt which*

will soon triumph over love, especially when aided by absence. Your residence shall be changed. I do not know where I may be able to send you, or in what position; but I will try not to neglect your interests in removing you. Good bye, my dear friend; you are not now able to talk about business. Come and see me again, and we will have a longer conversation."

The Bishop held out his hand, which Tisdal covered with kisses and tears, and withdrew.

CHAPTER X.

THE Bishop of Meath was no sooner alone than he despatched a messenger to Laracor, with orders to bring back Dr. Swift. Tisdal had moved him deeply, and his indignation at the misconduct of the Vicar was strengthened by resentment at seeing his young friend its victim. He was extremely irritated when Swift came to receive his orders; and without entering into any explanation, he addressed him as follows, in an imperious tone:

"You must give in your resignation of your living immediately, Sir."

Swift was not very patient by nature, but nothing makes one so calm as the sight of anger in another person. He looked fixedly at the prelate for some time without making any answer; at last he said, in a voice of mingled irony and surprise: "My resignation! why so?"

"Your conduct is known, Sir: let that suffice you, and do not force me to defile my lips with details which you know better than I."

"Your Lordship will be obliged to defile them, nevertheless, if you wish me to understand your meaning."

"Oh, you don't understand! You alone are ignorant of what scandalises the whole neighbourhood! You don't know that there is in this diocese a clergyman shameless enough to keep a mistress publicly in the sight of all the world, and under the very nose of his bishop! You don't know that the woman lives at Trim, and that the clergyman is no other than yourself!"

"And is that why I am to give up my living?"

"Yes, Sir; the sooner the better, for that is the least that can happen to you."

"Your Lordship must excuse me; that is a serious step, and one which demands consideration."

"It is the only step you can take, Sir: either give up your living, or clear your character."

"I shall do neither the one nor the other, my Lord."

"Have a care, Sir. These fine airs will not impose upon me: if you are silent, it is because you have nothing to say in your own behalf."

"If your Lordship's charity towards me is unable to suggest to you any more favourable interpretation of my silence, I shall indeed feel great regret, but my regret will not cause me to break it."

"Indeed! Your impudence amazes me. After parading your vices, as you have done, can you still hope to deceive me? This is too much! You should at least choose between cynicism and hypocrisy."

Of all vices, Swift hated hypocrisy most: his coolness forsook him.

"Is that all you have to say, my Lord?" asked he, going towards the door.

"No, Sir, it is not all. Stop, I have some questions to ask you. You were once Prebendary of Kilroot?"—"Yes, my Lord."

"For how long?"—"For three or four months."

"And why did you give up the prebend?"—"For a reason which I would rather not tell."

"What was the reason, Sir?" cried the Bishop, growing hot. "But beware of equivocation; I know the truth."

"If so, my Lord, it is needless for me to speak."

"Sir, you forget the respect you owe to your superior."

"Not so, my Lord; I do but keep in mind that which I owe to myself."

"Then, Sir, you refuse to answer my questions?"—"I do."

"Is that your final determination?"—"It is."

"You may withdraw, Sir."

After such a defiance the Bishop had no motive for sparing Swift, and he determined to provoke a judicial

inquiry. Accordingly he wrote in confidence to his colleague, the Bishop of O'Conner, whose diocese included the prebend of Kilroot, requesting him to forward, as soon as possible, an exact account of Swift's conduct while at his prebend, and of his reasons for giving it up all on a sudden; in short, an enumeration of whatever facts might serve to support an accusation against Swift.

In answer to this letter, the Bishop of O'Connor wrote word, that he was not himself able to give the desired information, seeing that, at the period in question, he had not been promoted to the see; but that he would send to the spot, and gather from the most authentic sources, whatever details might throw light upon a matter in which public morality and the consideration of the clergy were so deeply involved.

While this storm was gathering over his head, Swift in no degree altered his way of life, and continued to bestow upon his friends all the spare time that his literary labours and pastoral duties left him. He had not, any more than Tisdal, thought fit to acquaint his friends at Trim with the interview he had had with the Bishop of Meath. No one could have guessed from his manner that anything unusual had taken place, and the two ladies continued to pass their time in the utmost security.

The only thing which might have given them any cause for suspicion was the absence of Tisdal, who had not entered their house again. But having already exhausted all possible excuses, and fearing lest they should again come and see him, Tisdal, under the pretext of a commission from the Bishop, went to Dublin there to await the upshot of this unlucky affair. His absence, therefore, gave them no other uneasiness than that caused by the loss of their game of whist for want of a fourth partner.

But the Bishop of Meath was so convinced of Swift's guilt and so much offended by his resistance, that he did not act with the same caution. He mentioned the matter, as a profound secret, to several of his confidential friends; these again had their friends, and thus, from mouth to mouth, the anecdote was soon spread abroad with all the additions which slander could supply. Swift had managed to bring over to his side many who had originally

been prejudiced against him ; nevertheless, spite of all his victories, there still remained in his parish, besides Mistress Jebb and her club of devotees, an undecided multitude, who were restrained by fear, and who waited only for an opportunity to show their malevolence. The retired life which the two ladies led, the mere fact that they were English, and the beauty of Mrs. Johnson, had excited observation, and converted many of the women especially into their personal enemies. They were thought proud and reserved ; to discover that their conduct was quite the reverse was a great triumph, and to make the triumph complete, care was taken that the reports current against their reputation should reach their ears.

When these reports were told them, it must be confessed that if Mrs. Johnson's innocence was feigned, she acted her part admirably well, for she did not seem to understand a word of what was said. She opening her eyes very wide, and appeared not the least affected by intelligence which, whether true or false, was at all events very disagreeable.

Mrs. Dingley behaved far otherwise ; she made a great outcry, and with the most exemplary self-devotion, took upon herself the imputations cast upon her friend. "To treat young women thus ! what an abominable country Ireland must be. This could never have happened in England !" In short, she said and did so much, that Esther burst into tears, and said that she wished to leave the place.

This was exactly what Mrs. Dingley wanted. She was tired of Trim, tired of Laracor : she desired nothing so much as a pretext for going elsewhere, with her pack of cards and her almanac. She declared that Stella was quite right : that they could no longer stay there in so equivocal a position, to be a bone of contention between Swift and his Bishop. They must go as soon as possible, and secretly ; otherwise Swift would refuse to accept the sacrifice they were about to make for him. She, therefore, agreed with Esther not to let Swift know anything of their intentions, and to make all their preparations for departure by stealth.

Mrs. Dingley was, as we have seen, very far from being active by nature; but she had fits of activity. Want of occupation rather than indolence was her besetting sin, and when Providence did send her an idea, or a fancy, she soon left her arm-chair. The adventure pleased her in more ways than one: there was the mysterious flight, for a cause which made her seem young, besides a total change in her way of life. She mistook caprice for dignity of character, and began to pack up her things with unparalleled ardour.

But Esther—poor Esther! How her heart sunk at the idea of leaving her pretty house, where she had been so happy! And her dear little feathered people, what would become of them during her absence? who would take care of them all? And the good Doctor, was not she to see him again? And Presto himself, her darling Presto! must she part from him too? Alas, at this thought all her courage forsook her, and she ran to hide herself in her room, where she might cry without restraint.

But Dingley knew best what ought to be done, and Dingley said that it was for Presto's good that they should go away. So there was nothing for it but to resign herself, and to go and help Dingley to pack. Nevertheless, in a moment sorrow and regret again got the upper hand with her, and an hour before the time fixed for their departure, Dingley saw her watering the flowers which she had entirely neglected so long.

Dingley observed that her care was somewhat tardy, and very disinterested. It could not be owing to the force of habit, she must be doing it in a fit of absence of mind.

It was Sunday. Dingley had chosen that day because Swift, being detained at Laracor by his duties, they were left to their own devices. At dusk, Dingley sent for the car which was to convey the two fugitives and their baggage to Dublin, whence they could next day embark for England.

For several days past Esther had eaten nothing, and her eyes were red. Dingley wore an air of heroic dignity which was highly suspicious, and the very cook had *something mysterious and important in her face and*

manner, which clearly showed that a plot was brewing. Luckily Swift had observed nothing, and yet, when the baggage was put upon the car, and the two fair travellers were about to follow it, there he was, ready to offer them his hand.

As they could not deny their scheme, Mrs. Dingley undertook to justify it. Having learned that they were a stumbling-block, a cause of disagreement between him and his Bishop, they had thought it right to sacrifice themselves to his repose; and it was in order to spare his delicacy that they had kept their departure secret. Indeed, indeed, they would never have had the heart to leave their dear Presto, if they had not looked upon this separation as temporary; and believed that when this cloud was dispersed, they might live with him as heretofore.

If Swift suffered her to enter into so many explanations, it was not because he was disposed to listen to them; the fact was, that he was speechless from anger, as they found to their cost when he had recovered his voice. Never had he displayed such furious indignation, and Stella was as much exposed to it as Dingley. He upbraided them with ingratitude, and declared to them that they were free to go wherever they pleased; but that if once they crossed the threshold of that house, he would never see them again in his life. He told them that he thought it matchless impudence in them to pretend to serve him against his will; that he was not a child, to be held in leading-strings by them; and that if they had had a shadow of common sense, they would have seen that their flight would at once give a show of truth to the calumny.

In short, he scolded them so much, and in so angry a voice, especially Dingley, who being the eldest, was no doubt the most responsible for this absurd step; he struck such terror into every one present, that the car returned, as if by magic, to its owner's stables, and the luggage retreated of its own accord into the cupboard.

CHAPTER XI.

MEANWHILE, the information for which the Bishop of Meath was waiting had not arrived; and he was about to write again to his colleague, O'Connor, whom he suspected of negligence, when Doctor Winder, the Prebendary of Kilroot, was announced.

The Prebendary of Kilroot! He ordered him to be shown in; and there appeared a man of about fifty, leading by the hand a little girl, who might be about twelve. His demeanour was simple and straightforward, his features calm and open. Never did a man's appearance give more strongly the idea of a perfectly clear conscience.

"I beg your pardon, my Lord, for appearing before your Grace in this garb," said he, pointing to his staff and his muddy shoes; "but I have come on foot."

"On foot! from Kilroot! Why that is nearly a hundred miles."

"A man must travel as he can, my Lord: and I have a large family."

"Pray, Sir, be seated. You have come as a witness in Doctor Swift's affair?"—"Yes, my Lord."

"I am sorry that my colleague of O'Connor should have thought it necessary to send you hither; your written deposition would have been quite sufficient."

"My Lord, the Bishop of O'Connor did not tell me to come. It was I who did not think I could do otherwise. You will understand the reason, my Lord, when you have heard what I have got to say."

The Prebendary's voice trembled, and the Bishop bowed to show that he was listening.

"My Lord, a very short time—a few months at most—after Doctor Swift had been presented to Kilroot, I met him one day on the road between his parish and mine. He had never seen me. I knew him from having once heard him preach. I was on horseback, and he was on foot. I bowed to him in passing, and he stopped me to ask his way. He was going in the direction of my house; *so I got off my horse, and, as we walked together, we fell into conversation.* He questioned me about myself, my

family, my position: I told him that I was Curate of the parish towards which we were then going; that my stipend was forty guineas a year; that I had a wife and eight children. He asked me if I had any private fortune: I told him no.

"How, then," said he, 'do you find means to support so many persons, and to keep a horse into the bargain?'

"I replied that I had a few pupils in the neighbourhood, but that they were scattered far and wide, and that my little mare lessened the distances. He shook his head, and changed the conversation. We talked about morals, politics, literature. His conversation interested me in the highest degree, and he heard me with indulgence. On reaching my house, I was about to ask him in, when he forestalled my invitation, and desired to see my family. I presented them to him, and he was very kind to them. As he was going away, he asked me to lend him my little black mare.

"Most willingly," said I, thinking he was tired.

"But," said he, 'I want it for several days; I have a long journey to make.'

"His request rather surprised me; but I supposed that his own good-nature did not suffer him to question mine. Besides, no one is worse at refusing than I; and I could very well make my rounds on foot for a few days. So I saddled my mare for him, and he mounted her, and set off at once.

"A whole week—nay, eleven days—passed away, and I heard nothing of Doctor Swift. I began to be uneasy as to what my wife might say to me, when, on the evening of the twelfth day—I think I see him still—he arrived, mounted on my mare.

"I have kept her some time," said he; 'but then I have come a long way. Where do you think I have been?'

"You may very well have been to Dublin," said my wife, provoked by his free and easy air. 'You have had time enough.'

"You have hit it," said he, 'I have been to Dublin. You could not live, all ten of you, upon a living of ~~four~~ guineas a year, so I have got you one of a hundred.'

"A living of a hundred guineas! I could not believe my ears. But only think what I felt, when I heard it was his own prebend of Kilroot, which he had given up in my favour. He must have thought me very ungrateful for his generosity, for I stood without speaking a word; and when I recovered from my amazement, I could not think of any way of showing my gratitude but offering him my little black mare, which certainly was not worthy his acceptance. But he took her, in order not to hurt my feelings, and left the neighbourhood mounted on her back."

"To go and take possession of a better living, I presume!" said the Bishop.

"No, my Lord, neither a better nor a worse: he had no living whatever."

"And had he no motive for wishing to leave the parish?"—"None, my Lord, he was much liked there."

"Your tale is a strange one, you must admit."

"Yes, my Lord, strange indeed; but not less true. This was how I became acquainted with Doctor Swift, and succeeded him at Kilroot; and this is why I thought myself bound to make the same journey for his sake that he formerly made for mine."

The Prebendary's story was utterly inconsistent with the rumours in circulation; the Bishop looked at him suspiciously, and after a moment's silence he exclaimed: "Hark ye, Sir, examine your memory well. Did Doctor Swift know nothing of you before the accidental meeting you described to me?"—"Nothing, my Lord."

"Nor of any of your family?"—"Not one."

"Are you quite sure?"—"Quite."

The Bishop shook his head.

"Have a care, Sir: you know with what Doctor Swift is charged?"—"My Lord, the Bishop of O'Connor told me."

"It is possible that a mistaken feeling of Christian charity may lead you to shrink from giving evidence against a man who has injured you."—"My Lord, I have not come so far in order to tell a lie."

"No doubt that would be carrying charity almost too far; but then, perhaps—(I may say it between ourselves)—*perhaps the wish to hush up an affair nearly touching*

the honour of your family—(suffer me to conclude)—perhaps, also, embarrassment at owning the compensation you received...”—“My Lord, had the injury you allude to really been done me, such a compensation would be a dishonour ten times greater than the offence.”

“Undoubtedly, if it were in the nature of a bargain ; but as amends—I am not so severe as you—and in your position, with a wife and eight children...”—“One has nine persons, my Lord, to whom one is bound to set a good example.”

“Right, Sir, right ; spoken like a man of honour, and I am quite disposed to believe what you say. But how do you explain the common report ? What can have given rise to it ?”—“Malignity, my Lord ; and the unlikelihood of such disinterested conduct.”

“Maybe, maybe,” replied the Bishop, twisting his snuff-box between his fingers with a puzzled air ; “nothing is impossible in the way of evil speaking. This, however, you must allow exceeds all belief. Well, well, one is never too old to learn. I am very glad you came. A version of the story so diametrically opposite to the first, stands in need of the respect and confidence inspired by your appearance to be believed.”

The Bishop rose, and accompanied the Prebendary to the door with this compliment ; but he walked slowly with the manner of a man silenced rather than convinced. At the door he stopped for a moment, and taking by the chin the child who clung to her father’s skirts, he said : “What a pretty little girl ! Is she yours ?”—“Yes, my Lord.”

“And how many more have you like her ?”—“Three, my Lord.”

“This, then, is the youngest ?”—“No, my Lord, this is the eldest.”

“The eldest !—indeed ! Would not you like to see Doctor Swift ?”—“Oh, my Lord, assuredly I shall not return home without having performed that duty, or rather enjoyed that pleasure.”

“Well, Sir, well, wait a moment for me. We will go together. I, too, want to see him ; I, too, have a duty to perform towards him.”

The Bishop ordered the horses to be put to his coach, made the Prebendary and his daughter get into it, and drove with them to Laracor.

"Doctor," said he to Swift, on entering the room, "I have brought with me a person of your acquaintance, whom I am very glad to have seen, as he has enabled me to repair a grievous injustice."

Swift was astonished at this twofold visit, but the sight of his successor at Kilroot let him into the secret; and if the Bishop still had any misgivings, the meeting between the two colleagues must soon have dispelled them.

"Now, my Lord," said Swift, when the first affectionate greetings were over, "I owe you an explanation."

"Why so? this explains everything," said the Bishop, pointing to Doctor Winder and his daughter.

"I beg pardon, my Lord, the Laracor accusation may be well founded, though the Kilroot story is false; allow me to answer it."

"If it is in order to enable me the better to confound your calumniators, speak, Doctor, I will hear you."

Doctor Winder was about to withdraw discreetly, but Swift prevented him.

"Where are you going, Doctor? You know only the first part of my history. You must now hear the second. Guess what I did on first arriving here in a neighbourhood where I was met by nothing but prejudice and plots. I instantly sent for my mistress—somewhat shameless, and not very prudent, I admit—but passion knows no reason, and certainly a beautiful girl of seventeen, whom one establishes near to oneself, whom one visits continually, almost daily, cannot possibly be anything but a mistress. Yet suppose it were my intention to marry her?"

At these words the Bishop trembled; hitherto he had merely been trying to listen to Swift's sarcasms with an air of unconcern; but now his cares were all for Tisdal.

"I know very well," pursued Swift, in the same tone, "that I am rather old for a girl of that age. Still, far more unequal marriages are made; and if my censors had but taken the trouble to remark that I made no attempt *at concealment*, that I observed every rule of propriety, *that the young woman in question lives at Trim and not*

at Laracor, and that she is with a friend of her mother's, who is present whenever I visit her, perhaps they might have thought this interpretation tolerably natural."

"At all events it would have been more charitable," said the Bishop, taking care not to understand the implied rebuke. "But why did you not give it sooner? You would have saved us from error, and yourself from some annoyance."

"For a very good reason, my Lord, because it is not the truth."

"What! the young lady...." began the Bishop, surprised and relieved.

"I love her with all my heart, but like a father. She is an orphan, born in the house of Sir William Temple, who bequeathed her to my care on his death-bed. I promised to be a father to her; and in order to fulfil this duty, which was likewise the desire of my heart—in order to shield her from temptation and calumny—I sent for her to Ireland. I little thought that my precaution would be turned against her and against myself. Perhaps I have lacked prudence in all this, but nothing makes a man more incautious than a clear conscience; and my ward, spite of her seventeen years of age, is so young, that but for all this scandal I should not yet have found out that she could be a subject for calumny."

"Then you have no intention whatever of marrying her!" said the Bishop, delighted, and laying hold of this declaration on Tisdal's behalf.

"None, whatever," answered Swift. "I have never thought of marrying at all, and least of all of marrying her. I have been so long used to her as a child, that I still look upon her as such; and but for all this tittle-tattle, I should never have made any difference between her and my other accomplice yonder," he added, pointing to the Prebendary's little girl.

After so precise a declaration, there was nothing more to be said. Swift had certainly not borne his triumph meekly; but the Bishop forgave him, in consideration of his determination; and curious to see his young favourite's choice, as well as to atone for the injury he had done to *Mrs. Johnson*, by lending too ready an ear to the stories

against her, he requested Swift to present him to the two ladies, and offered to carry him to Trim in his coach.

Nothing could be more agreeable to Swift; and the whole party got into the Bishop's coach, to the dismay of Mistress Jebb, who had conceived far different hopes from the Bishop's visit.

Both ladies were at home; neither of them loved exercise, and they went out more seldom than ever, since they knew how they had been talked of. Mrs. Dingley was by herself in the parlour, once more faithful to her arm-chair, deep in a game of patience, and in dishabille, although it was late. Her amazement was great at the arrival of so much good company. She hastily gathered up her cards, and under pretence of summoning Mrs. Johnson, she took flight up-stairs, in order to dress more suitably.

Esther, who was in the garden, came running in; and her pretty childish ways confirmed the Bishop in his opinion of her complete innocence, as well as of the other good qualities which she might be presumed to have from the attachment with which she had inspired Tisdal. A good deal of time had passed in driving, and the Bishop found himself compelled to shorten his visit. But he promised to repeat it very soon, and nothing short of this promise could have consoled Mrs. Dingley, who was sticking in her last pin as the coach drove off, conveying the Bishop back to the Palace.

Doctor Winder and his little girl had been asked to dinner by the ladies at Trim, and Swift, delighted at the happy results of the day, did the honours of the repast with unusual gaiety; chiefly at the cost of Dinglibus, with her fine clothes, and the visit she had missed.

The two parsons supped with the Bishop of Meath, who gave Doctor Winder a letter for the Bishop of O'Connor; and, under the pretext of this commission, furnished him with the means of returning to Kilroot in a less fatiguing manner than that which he had come. Swift, however, would not consent to part from his colleague so soon. He took him to sleep at Laracor, and did not allow him to depart until the next day, when he loaded his accomplice, *as he insisted on calling the little girl, with presents for herself and all her brothers and sisters.*

Thus all the sorrow was now turned into joy. Tisdal alone was not present to share the happiness of his friends. The Bishop immediately sent for him back from Dublin, and gave himself the pleasure of telling him all the good news with his own lips. Not only had Mrs. Johnson been maligned but Swift had positively declared that he had no intention of marrying. Tisdal might, therefore, pay his addresses to her without fear of a rival; and when he had gained her consent, and the terms of the marriage came under discussion, he need not be uneasy at the smallness of his means: the Bishop undertook to provide for him. He bound himself to obtain for him an income of two hundred guineas a year, in one or more livings; and as he had to wait till they fell in, he would settle upon him a like annuity out of the revenues of the bishopric, to begin on his wedding-day. He owed him, he said, at least these amends for the grief he had caused him.

CHAPTER XII.

It was needless to say that Tisdal left the Bishop's Palace on his way to Mrs. Johnson, more in love than ever, and delighted at not having to enter into any explanations. He felt an indescribable sensation of pleasure, an uncommon degree of confidence. He had suffered so much, that fortune owed him some amends! Swift's declaration, and the Bishop's liberality, filled his heart with hope: he resolved to make an offer of marriage to Esther without delay.

This was going somewhat hastily to the point, and it would have been more politic in him had he felt his way a little beforehand; but he was just then in a fit of courage, and he knew his own character well enough to foresee that it would not last.

Besides, ill-versed as he was in the laws and customs of gallantry, he over-rated the difficulties and importance of the step he was about to take; and he ascribed to Love, the king of gods and men, all the rigid etiquette of a little German sovereign. He trembled at the thought of paying

his court to Esther. What, if by some awkwardness he were to displease her, and to wreck his future happiness! It would be much better to trust his fate in the hands of a third person.

But who should this third person be? Should he choose Swift? His character and the impressions left upon Tisdal's mind by past events, unjust as he now knew them to be, did not dispose him to take Swift into his confidence. After mature consideration, he fixed upon Mrs. Dingley.

She must know Esther's thoughts; besides, was it not she who foretold that he was to fall in love with a dark beauty?

He, therefore, opened his heart to her, and he set about it more adroitly than could have been expected from his candour, and certainly far more than he would ever have suspected himself. But the desire to succeed inspires innocence itself with cunning.

Moreover, he found Mrs. Dingley vastly well-disposed towards him. His absence had given him a flavour of novelty: since his return, and without any calculation on his part, he had been more polite to her than ever. She was flattered by a step, which was in itself an admission of her influence over Mrs. Johnson. He had not hinted at the possibility of a separation between the two ladies. He, like Esther, was very easy to live with: they suited her—they suited each other perfectly. To be sure the match was not very brilliant; but what is wealth compared with the treasures of the heart?

She therefore did not hesitate to give Tisdal great encouragement—not that she uttered a formal promise, but every word was spoken with a tone of reserve which enhanced its value. However, she warned Tisdal that Esther would never act against the wishes of her guardian. The first thing, therefore, was to gain Swift's consent; and as he was very jealous of his rights, care should be taken to conceal from him that any one had been consulted before himself.

This advice, and indeed the whole conversation, showed *real good-will* on the part of Mrs. Dingley. Tisdal *thanked her heartily*, and hastened to profit by it. This

first attempt had succeeded so well, he had drawn from it so many fresh incitements to hope, that he went to Swift with the air of a man about to go through a simple matter of form.

Swift was busy; but as soon as he saw his young colleague enter the room, he put down his pen, and received him with an apostrophe, which in his mouth was a sign of good-humour.

"Good morrow to you, Master Tisdal."—"Am I disturbing you, Doctor?"

"Not at all: I was racking my brains for thoughts, and writing nonsense after all. I am delighted to have an excuse for leaving off. What has brought me the honour of a visit from you?"

"I have come as a suitor to you, Doctor; and I would give the whole world that you should not think my request impertinent."

"You make an impertinent request! That would be something new; and faith, I too would give a good deal to hear it."

"Would you give your consent?"—"Yes, even my consent!"

"If I dared take you at your word.. "

"And so you may. I am not the man to draw back."

"Oh no! it's too serious," said Tisdal, with a sigh.

"Well then, my friend, the more serious it is," said Swift, shaking him affectionately by the hand, "the more you may reckon upon me."

"You shall see whether I trust you or not!" said Tisdal.

This demonstration of friendship was encouraging. Tisdal went straight to the point.

"Eh!" exclaimed Swift, with a voice of thunder, and with a lowering brow.

Tisdal lost much of his firmness: but perchance he had not clearly explained his meaning, and he repeated his suit in the most modest manner. "He felt how little right he had to cherish such hopes; nevertheless, if the most tender attachment, the most entire devotion, could suffice..."

"*A fiddlestick suffice!*" said Swift, interrupting him

with vehemence; "certainly not, that does not suffice. You can't live upon love: in order to marry, folks must have money—plenty of money! It's very prosaic; but so it is!"

"I am not young enough to be ignorant of this."

"Then I suppose you were not aware that Mrs. Johnson has nothing—at least, almost nothing?"

"I know it, and it was precisely this circumstance that gave me hope."

"Here's fine logic, indeed! But the less money the wife has, the more ought the husband to have."

"The poorer a woman is, the less likely is she to have extravagant fancies: and I flattered myself that Mrs. Bathor, whose tastes and habits are so simple, might not be unwilling to share my humble fortune."

"Bathor's tastes simple! her habits simple! What could make you fancy that? A girl brought up in the country-house of a great man, used to every indulgence! Besides, her health is delicate, she must travel for change of air, go to the waters, ride on horseback! And you think that all this is nothing? Well, if you can secure her all these things, I sha'n't object."

Tisdal might have asked how it was that Esther, all at once, wanted so many things, which she had done so well without until now; but the thought never came into his head. They were for her! He eagerly replied that he would make it his study to gratify the smallest wish that Mrs. Johnson might form.

"Very well!" cried Swift, with a sarcastic laugh.

"As soon as you can pay for everything out of your stipend as Curate..."

"I have other resources," said Tisdal, in a gentle voice.

"Oh, don't say another thing! if you have found a hidden treasure..."

"Indeed, the Bishop of Meath's interest is as good as a treasure to me. He has been kind enough to promise me a living as a marriage-broker."

"Is he so ready against? He is not chary of promises, but I don't believe him if you will, but I do not share your belief."

and if I refuse to trust the fate of my ward on so frail a chance."

"His Lordship," continued Tisdal, in a still gentler tone of voice, "has promised on my wedding-day to settle upon me two hundred guineas a year, out of the revenues of his see, which he will pay until he has provided me a like income from one or more livings."

"Two hundred guineas! Upon my word, I give you joy most heartily."

"You give your consent, then? for the gift is contingent upon the marriage."

"My consent? My consent? Gad, I like whatever pleases others: and, provided my ward is happy..." said he, biting the sheet of paper upon which he had been writing, "provided you consent to settle everything upon her. Esther has a fortune of one thousand guineas, and you have only a life-income."

"Quite true; and if it needs but so simple a condition to obtain your consent..."

"No doubt: and provided she has the complete control of her own income—provided you allow her, for her house expenses, a fixed sum, of which she shall have the exclusive direction—provided she has entire power over the servants, that you always allow her to decide all matters at issue between you and them, and that she alone has the right to choose or dismiss them—provided she may keep Dingley to live with her—provided, if she has children, she may educate them as she pleases, up to the age of seven, whatever be the sex..."

Some of these clauses were certainly exorbitant, but Tisdal was determined to raise no discussion, and he replied: "What mark of confidence could I deny to her who confides to me her future happiness?"

"Then you agree to these conditions?" asked Swift, evidently astonished,

"I agree to them all. Now may I hope?"

"Stop one moment. I must warn you also that your wife must be allowed to have all her mornings at her own disposal. Guests in a country-house are always left at liberty in the morning; and what is useful in a com-

panionship for a few weeks is indispensable in a connection for life."

This was a singular obligation. Tisdal stared at Swift. "If Mrs. Johnson wishes it..."

"What care I what she wishes! Don't I know very well what happens when two young folks marry? They are never apart for a moment; and abuse is followed by weariness. I shall, therefore, insist on this point, and so I tell you. After that, you may each do as you will."

Tisdal raised his eyes towards heaven; but fearing to give Swift any pretext for a refusal, he declared himself willing blindly to adopt anything that Swift's experience might suggest to him for the benefit of Mrs. Johnson.

He thought to gain Swift's consent by docility; but Swift had not done.

"The devil! have a little patience," he cried. "I expect, moreover, that you will engage to make me umpire in any difference that may arise between your wife and yourself."

The conditions became so numerous and so strange, they were uttered in so imperious a tone, that spite of his firm resolution, Tisdal could not help remonstrating.

"What! interfere between man and wife? That is rather a delicate matter, Doctor. Just consider: marriage usually emancipates a minor; whereas mine would put me under guardianship at the age of twenty-seven."

"You refuse then?" said Swift, briskly, rising from his chair.

"No—I agree," cried Tisdal. "The choice of the umpire sets my mind at ease. Is that all?"

"Is that all! do you say—is that all! You drive me up into a corner. Do let me take breath. How do you think that I'm to make you a whole code of conjugal felicity extempore, as I stand here? You seem to think that marriage is mere child's play—a thing to be arranged like a party of pleasure. I tell you, Sir, it's a very serious matter, and one which cannot be discussed; that if I had known your intention before, if Mrs. Johnson had done me the honour to ask my advice..."

"It will be her first thought I'm sure, as soon as she *hears my suit.*"

"What! she does not know that you want to marry her?" cried Swift, shoving back his wig.

"She does not even know that I love her."

"Then what the devil have you come here for?" said Swift, looking fixedly at him.

"I thought that it was more proper to make known my wishes to you first."

"What! without knowing her intentions, without finding out whether she's of the same mind as yourself? May I ask whether you take me for a tyrannical old guardian in a play? Do you expect, I wonder, that I shall force the inclinations of my ward to please you."

"God forbid! I intended as soon as I received your consent..."

"Lord, Sir! you should begin with the beginning. Deuce take it! here am I overwhelmed with work, and you make me lose two good hours in listening to some silly scheme or other. Get you gone, Sir, get you gone! My time is precious. Get you gone, and let me mind my business."

Tisdal endeavoured to reply; but, somehow or other, he found himself outside the door before he could utter a word.

CHAPTER XIII.

BEWILDERED by Swift's reception, Tisdal hastened back to Trim, to seek consolation from Mrs. Dingley. She was alone, and impatiently expecting him.

"What news?" cried she the moment she caught sight of him.

He shrugged his shoulders, and let drop his arms with a deep sigh.—"Can he have refused?"

This was a question he knew not how to answer, and he begged her to judge for herself from his account of their interview.

Mrs. Dingley was very obstinate in hoping; and she interrupted him at the very beginning.

"He was busy, you say. Oh! you disturbed him, and

that put him out of humour."—"No: he received me very well at first; but his face clouded over the moment he heard the object of my visit."

"He has such queer notions about marriage! But what did he say when you told him of his Lordship's promise?"—"He looked more surprised than pleased. He raised a thousand difficulties, and made conditions without end, all more extraordinary the one than the other." And Tisdal recapitulated the greater part.

"You must excuse him," said Mrs. Dingle. "He does so love Stella, and he does so dearly love to be cross. But, be sure he won't insist upon these conditions."

"Oh, never mind if he does. They are all for the good of Mrs. Esther, and I agree to them with all my heart."

"Well, and then?"—"Why, I got nothing by it. He only became harder to deal with."

"Is it possible! And what do you think could be the reason!"—"I cannot think. If he were a man to do things in a round-about way, I should have thought he was seeking a pretext to refuse me."

"What a notion!"—"All I can tell you is, that his impatience grew with every concession I made; and at last he told me in a great passion that I ought to have paid my addresses to Mrs. Esther first, whereupon he bowed me out."

"You don't say so!" Mrs. Dingley suddenly became thoughtful.

"And you say he seemed more vexed at every objection you answered?" continued she, after a few moments of silence.—"Indeed, he did."

"And before you told him your intentions, he gave you a friendly welcome?"—"More than friendly—affectionate."

Mrs. Dingley fell back into her reverie, and remained some time without speaking. "And what do you intend to do?" said she, with a careless air.

Tisdal saw that she threw up the game.

"What do I intend to do?" said he, quickly; "why I *have no choice*. I must end where I ought to have

begun. I shall throw myself at Mrs. Esther's feet, open my heart to her, and endeavour to soften hers."

"You had better do nothing of the kind," cried she. — "Why so?"

"You don't know her. It won't do to startle her."

Tisdal was not prepared for this sudden turning round. He looked at Mrs. Dingley with amazement.

"But," he replied, "if the Doctor speaks to her first I am lost." — "Don't be afraid! Am not I here?"

"What, will you have the charity..."

"Leave it to me."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Dingley, how grateful I am to you. I have no hope but in you. My life is in your hands."

"Very well, very well! But now go! Stella may come in at any moment, and it will be better that she should find me alone."

"I'm going. But tell her, good Mrs. Dingley, tell her how much I love her; how happy I should be to devote my existence..."

And he went on charging her with messages, and kissing her hand, until Mrs. Dingley pushed him out of the room.

It was the second time that day that Tisdal had been turned out of doors; but this time he was better pleased than the first.

He had, however, still less reason for satisfaction; for he had, by his candid narrative, turned a useful and zealous ally into a dangerous enemy.

Mrs. Dingley, like a true old maid, loved to meddle in other folks' affairs. But she was not gifted with much invention, and did not rack her brain to lay the plan of her intrigues long beforehand. She patiently awaited the ideas which were forced upon her by circumstances.

Living with Esther suited her in all respects. She had no family ties, and had been alone in the world; and this gave her a home. They had both found economy and increased comfort from joining their two little fortunes, especially Dingley who had contributed the least to the common stock. An intimacy with Doctor Swift, though she only enjoyed it at second hand, flattered her vanity. *How could she endure the thought that this community*

might one day cease. As she herself had reached an age at which she had given up the idea of marrying, it had never occurred to her that a girl of seventeen might not choose a life of celibacy; or rather, she looked upon her as completely settled in life. She, Dingley, had tacitly promised protection to Esther. In return, she had tacitly vowed to herself obedience on Esther's behalf. The ceremony was accomplished: they were married to one another; and as it was at once a marriage of inclination and of convenience, she had never so much as thought of the possibility of divorce.

When Tisdal broke in upon them with his proposal, Dingley's first impulse had been a hostile one, but she considered it did not involve the dissolution of her partnership with Stella, that he only desired to be admitted into it as a third, and that he would bring a considerable increase to the common fund. The result of these reflections was, that she saw no objection to an extension of their family circle, and accordingly she received his offer, not indeed with any eagerness, but still with tolerable complacency.

Such was the posture of affairs, when, unhappily for himself, Tisdal unwittingly put Dingley upon a fresh scent. Might not Swift himself, she thought, have views upon Esther? Else, why that ill-humour, growing as each successive difficulty was smoothed down. Thanks to the Bishop of Meath, Tisdal had become a pretty good match; why then had Swift betrayed such a dislike to the marriage and yet been ashamed to give a refusal? Why, unless from embarrassment at the idea of suddenly appearing as the rival of a friend who had applied to him in the character of a guardian?

This was indeed a new light to Dingley, and one which revealed to her a brilliant prospect! Doctor Swift, a man of such merit, who by his talents, his character, and his connections may rise to anything, who can't fail some day to be a Bishop or even an Archbishop! Such a man as that, would indeed be a very different match to poor Doctor Tisdal, with his humility and meanness of *spirit, who never will be anything better than a little country parson!*

Such had been the cogitations of Mrs. Dingley while Tisdal, in the simplicity of his heart, told her how cavalierly Swift had bowed him out, and this was the cause of the eagerness with which she undertook to speak to Esther in his behalf.

Esther's heart was just then in the state which that of every young girl goes through at some time or another, namely, quite ready to be lost to the first man who may present himself as a lover, whether real or feigned. Mrs. Dingley, though by no means a deep observer of human nature, knew this from her own experience, and dreaded the effects upon Stella of a pathetic declaration from Tisdal so much, that she resolved to forestal him.

She therefore lost no time. As soon as she was alone with Stella, she turned the conversation upon marriage, and forgot her own vanity so far as to extol the marriage-state in a manner which could not but have great weight coming from an old maid. Hence, the transition to her real object was easy, she hinted that it was very likely that Presto thought of making Stella his wife.

Esther's first impression on hearing this was that of a child who has a horse or a gun given him for the first time—a mixture of delight, surprise and pride. So she really was grown up. But this was soon succeeded by shame, and she declared that Beck must be laughing at her.

The latter did not venture upon anything farther then. She wondered what she should say to Tisdal when he came again. Never mind, Swift would be with him, and would have got over his shyness, and he would give him an answer.

But Tisdal returned alone; Swift had stopped at home to work, probably to make up for the time which Tisdal had caused him to lose.

So much the better, thought Dingley; Tisdal won't be so troublesome.

And when he took her aside to ask after Stella's answer:

"Her answer," cried she; "what haste you are in! I have not had time to open my lips. Stella came home late, and you were back so soon; this is not a matter that *can be settled* in five minutes. Besides, there's no hurry;

you see that Dr. Swift leaves us to ourselves, which would not be the case if he intended you any ill-service."

"Do you really think so? but he was so ill-humoured..."

"Because you disturbed him at work, as I told you. He would not own it, but take my word for it, you had better tear a lion from his prey than an author from his work."

Tisdal was not convinced; but he reckoned too much on Mrs. Dingley's support to contradict her; he therefore withstood the temptation of pleading his own cause, and went away as he had come.

To have a day before her was more than half the battle; but in that day Dingley did not make so much progress as she had expected, and it was in vain that on the same evening, and the following morning, she repeatedly turned the conversation to the subject which she and Stella had been discussing before. She had begun to be uneasy at Stella's silence, when she surprised her incredulous young friend laying the cards to tell a fortune. Her blushes, and the hasty manner in which she tried to hide the cards, fully betrayed the subject on which she was consulting the Fates. Mrs. Dingley pretended to see nothing.

At dinner-time the two rivals came together. So much the better, thought Dingley. Presto was going to declare himself at last: but Presto made no declaration. So much the better: it was a lover's quarrel. Stella cast furtive glances at Swift, and they were both more reserved in their manner towards each other. All was going on well.

Meanwhile it was necessary to feed Tisdal's hopes: so she whispered in his ear that she had begun to sound Esther, but as yet only as to her inclination towards marriage generally. She was a mere child, and must be led, not driven: she had discovered this at the first word.

Either from pride or indifference, it was clear that Swift held off, and Tisdal more readily submitted to the delays of his plenipotentiary.

When the two gentlemen were gone, Dingley pulled out a pack of cards. In some confusion at the sight of *the cards*, Esther opened a book which Swift had given *her to read*. She did not, however, turn the leaf, but

watched Dingley out of the corner of her eye. The latter finished her game of patience.

"Shall I tell your fortune for you?" asked she.—"No, thank you."

"Very well then: will you tell me mine?"—"Yes, if you please."

That was quite another thing. When the operation was at an end, Dingley shuffled the cards, and cried: "It is my turn now: cut."

To persist in her refusal would have seemed affected: so Esther cut the cards with a blush.

Did the Fates really speak with Dingley's voice, or did she interpret their will falsely; or is it, perhaps, that in cards, as in the clouds, we see whatever we wish to behold; at all events, they foretold to Esther such a marriage as rarely takes place.

This was a fine occasion for resuming her theme, and Dingley did not let it escape. Stella's imagination had been sufficiently struck to make her feel the full force of persuasion. Dingley attacked her with all her arguments. Presto's partiality for his darling Stella, his indulgence to her and to her only, the youth of the guardian, the charms of the ward, were all insisted upon as evidences of love. His sending for them over to Ireland, his obstinacy in keeping them there spite of everything, his anger at their flight, were proofs of his intention of marrying her. If he did not yet execute that intention, it was only because he was waiting for better preferment than Laracor.

"And he will not have to wait long," she continued. "Such men as he are not made to be buried alive in a village. You haven't heard that he's going to be sent on a splendid mission. You mustn't say anything about it; it's a secret. But Doctor Tisdal heard it at the Palace. The Irish clergy are going to petition for the remission of the first fruits and twentieth parts; and my Lord the Bishop of Meath has persuaded the Primate to entrust the mission to Presto. Only think, he will see the Queen and the ministers, and show what he can do; and the least he can get for his trouble will be a bishopric."

Esther had seated herself at Dingley's feet, the better to listen to such enticing words. She was all attention.

But the thought that Presto was going to leave her, rather troubled her delight.

"What! is he going away?"

"He is going, to come back soon; to come back a bishop! to come back and marry his dear little Stella. Oh dear, yes; Stella will be the wife of Presto; the wife of a Bishop! of a man whom folks call my Lord!"

And Dingley, intoxicated with her own eloquence, kissed with transport the graceful head on which so brilliant a destiny was to alight. Then she went on: "Let us see which bishopric shall we choose? The Archbishop of Dublin is dying, shall he be Archbishop of Dublin? No, I am joking; one must be a Bishop first."

"Yes, yes, one must be a Bishop first," said Esther, with an air of moderation.

"Shall it be in Ireland?" continued Dingley, "Eh! oh, indeed no, not in Ireland! I have had enough of this odious country! We will content ourselves with a very modest bishopric, but it must be in England."

Generally these two gossips were not at all fond of sitting up late; but this night they heard the neighbouring church clock strike two.

Next day a glance at the newspaper, which the Bishop always sent to his fair neighbours, after he had read it himself, informed Dingley that the author of her favourite almanac, the illustrious Doctor John Partridge, had just arrived at Dublin in the course of his travels. Though there are vastly few physicians who are conjurors, there is not a single conjuror who is not a bit of a physician. What a prodigious piece of luck. Dingley resolved to take the opportunity and get cured of all her ailments—this idea was followed by another less selfish one.

"I say, Stella, suppose we were to go and consult him about our marriage?"—"Oh good gracious, no! on no account!"

"Well, but if we were to write to him?" said Dingley, in a very low voice.—"Would that do?" asked Esther, in a still lower.

"Oh yes, he is so clever, that he does not need even to *see people to tell their fortunes*; a lock of hair and an *old left-hand glove* are quite enough for him."

Esther had done enough for the satisfaction of her conscience in refusing to go to Dublin. She let Dingley cut off a lock of her hair, and gave her one of her gloves. Dingley wrote the letter, and all three were carefully sealed up and sent by the post to Doctor John Partridge.

Dingley had particularly asked for an immediate answer. Nevertheless, several days passed, and no answer came ; it became very difficult to amuse Tisdal with excuses. At last, however, the letter arrived, and its contents were exactly such as were wished for. When one asks an opinion by writing, one cannot be too particular as to the facts ; and Dingley had entered into so many details, that the veriest tyro of a magician could not have lost his way in the labyrinths of his art ; when guided by such a clue. Still less, then, the prince of astrologers, the incomparable, the infallible Doctor John Partridge.

Esther had not seen Dingley's letter, and accordingly she could not but be struck by Partridge's answer. She could no longer doubt that a man who guessed the past so well was able to read the future. And then how could she refuse to believe a prediction that promised her the happiest union with one whom only respect and admiration had hitherto prevented her from loving ? Dingley expected to see her jump for joy, but she did no such thing. She was very calm, and even incredulous ; though all the rest of the day she was in the wildest spirits, and kept kissing Beck every minute.

"Now then," said the latter to herself, "I think I may execute Doctor Tisdal's commission."

She did so, and Esther was surprised, less, however, than Dingley could have wished, who accordingly rejoiced at not having spoken before. It was manifest that Esther was moved by Tisdal's offer, and that it cost her a pang to refuse it. But there was nothing else to be done, as she was to marry Presto. Dingley used her best endeavours to confirm Stella's resolution. She cooled down Tisdal's sentiments ; she changed his love into a very reasonable inclination, and lessened the disappointment that he would feel at a refusal. Then turning the conversation suddenly upon Presto, she dwelt upon his superior merit, his goodness, his affection for her, and the gratitude

which she owed him. She compromised Esther in her own eyes, by talking to her of her love for Swift as an undoubted fact, and then choosing a propitious moment to dazzle her eyes with a bishopric, she prevailed upon Stella to authorise her to refuse poor Tisdal.

This was a disagreeable business for her to perform. But the consequences were too important to admit of any hesitation, and it would be something to be rid of the trouble of keeping Tisdal's impatience in check, and of the constant fear lest he should make some vehement declaration. Moreover, she had not a heart of stone, and of late, towards the approach of the catastrophe she had prepared, she had thrown cold water upon the poor lover's hopes, and had lowered them a little each day, so as to lessen his final fall.

Thus Dingley had rendered her task less painful. Nevertheless, when she fulfilled it, Tisdal looked so pale, and so woe-begone, that she could not find a word of consolation for him, and almost repented of what she had done.

From this moment, however, Swift suddenly recovered his good-humour.

"Good," said she to herself, "he has got wind of the refusal. Without exactly telling him, Tisdal has let it out."

This entirely consoled her for Tisdal's grief; besides he was no longer there. His patron the Bishop had taken him into the country, in order to divert him. He would do as she had done—he would make up his mind to it. She completely gave herself up to her intoxicating hopes.

From the moment that Tisdal went away, Swift was always at Trim. He had resumed his former manners; his little language, his paternal fondness; he was so polite that even Dingley came in for a share of his attentions; he even dressed with care!

Meanwhile the mission remained in abeyance, because he sent no answer.

"Good," thought Dingley, "he can't make up his mind to leave Stella."

She did not hesitate to make remarks of this kind aloud before Esther, who no longer dissembled her feelings, and

felt only the misgivings inspired by passion. Dingley determined to relieve her uneasiness, and to hasten a catastrophe which she was sure they all three wished for at the bottom of their hearts.

"What's the use of shilly-shallying, when we are all of one mind? Does he suppose that I don't guess his thoughts? If I'm not as clever as he, I'm not quite a fool. Suppose it does not suit him to marry directly, he is a man of honour, and we shall be satisfied with his word."

Encouraged by her previous success, she now brought all her tactics to bear upon this point, and she strove by all sorts of insinuations and hints, interspersed with sarcasms against Tisdal, to make Swift understand what was expected of him. It was all in vain. Swift, who had no idea that Tisdal was seriously in love, did not refrain from breaking a few jests upon him, in imitation of Dingley and from habit. But that was all, and her hints, though none of the slightest, passed unnoticed.

Could it be absence of mind or obstinacy? Dingley did not know what to think or what to do. She was contriving how to bring about an explanation, when it was done by chance.

One morning, Swift arrived at Trim earlier than usual, and found no one at home. On the parlour table lay the book which he had given Stella to read. He took it up to see how far she had got.

"How now! no further than that. Lazy sluttikin," said he, smiling. A letter folded in two supplied the place of a mark. He opened it, as was his habit at Trim. Woe betide the papers which fell into his hands; he had no scruples! Stella was his daughter, and Dingley too in this respect.

It was the letter from Partridge, whose name immediately caught his eye.

"What a fool that Dingley is!" cried he, angrily, "she's quite incorrigible." But what was his disgust when he read the prediction, and saw what part he played in it. He crushed the letter in his hand.

"So these are their plots, are they? This is how I'm to be disposed of! Now I see why Tisdal was refused."

it was to give the preference to me. Confounded witch! to put such nonsense into that child's head! Such beasts stick at nothing. One would think that their folly ought to keep them out of mischief: but not at all; they are always clever enough to do harm."

While he was making these reflections, Dingley came into the parlour, and, to make it worse for her, alone.

"What is the meaning of this letter?" said he, holding it up to her nose.

"That letter!" she replied, with a forced laugh, which did not at all conceal her embarrassment. "Oh! that is magic. You philosophers have nothing to do with that."

"I am not jesting, Madam, I would have you to know," said he, in the harshest tone, and snatching back the paper, which she tried to take out of his hand: "what makes you get such nonsense written to you?"

"Good gracious! how angry you are at a childish frolic!"

"That's not the question, Madam. Your childish frolics at fifty are ridiculous enough; however, I am used to them. But I am astonished that you should dare to meddle with my affairs, and that you should bribe a vile quack to turn Stella's head."

Dingley had tried to double, but Swift cut off her retreat. "The most timid animals have courage when they are driven into a corner; and Dingley now stood at bay.

"I turn her head?" said she, calling up all the effrontery of which she was mistress.

"What! do you dare to deny it, when I hold the proof in my hand?"

"That proves nothing but that her head was already turned."—"And by whom, then, if not by you?"

"What if it were by yourself?"—"By me!"

"Yes, by you. One would think it was I who had made her come to Ireland."—"I made you come with her: must I marry you too?"

"Oh! as for me, if Doctor Tisdal had asked my hand of you, you would not have received him so ill."—"Received him ill! I told him to speak to Stella."

"Yes! but so long as she had not given him her answer, pray who was it that was sulky?"—"Sulky!"

"And who was it that was quite overjoyed when she said 'No'?"

"Pray what made you fancy all this?"

"Why, the same thing that made Esther fancy it; it was easy enough to see, I'm sure."

"Well, and what then? Must not I take an interest in Stella, but you must instantly draw absurd inferences from it? Suppose I do not think that Tisdal would suit her? He is a very good sort of fellow, I grant you; but that is not all that is wanted to make a good husband. A man should have discretion and firmness in order to marry, especially to marry Stella, who is but a child, and will stand in need of a guide and mentor for a long while to come."

"For that very reason, it seemed so natural to think..."

"You must surely have lost your wits. Have not you heard me say a hundred times that I did not choose to marry?"—"Until you had made your fortune."

"Well, and have I made it? Have I enough to maintain a family?"—"Not now; but one may hope..."

"Hold your tongue! If I had millions I would not marry Stella. You seem to have forgotten all that took place, and all the abominable reports that were spread."—"But all that has been cleared up."

"So it has; but I assured the Bishop of Meath that I was as a father to her, and no more."—"There is no harm in changing your mind."

"Yes, Madam, there is harm. I don't choose to rake up all the old scandal, to make myself pass for a hypocrite, to dishonour her and myself together! So mind what you are about. She would be sadly deceived if she listened to you. See what comes of idleness! for want of something better to do, you have risked the happiness of a poor girl, who loves you, and whom you are fond of!"

The quarrel had thus become altogether personal to herself, and Dingley bowed her head, to let the storm pass.

Silence, however, is not conviction, although despotic natures are too apt to interpret it so; and while Swift *walked up and down the room, muttering to himself,*

Dingley was making her own reflections. She saw that Swift could not marry Stella in the diocese of Meath; but a change of residence would set him free. His anger, according to her, was caused by vexation at having his intentions found out.

They both remained silent, and their position became very awkward. Dingley dared not stir, and Swift felt the uneasiness which always follows any outburst of anger. Just then Esther very luckily came in.

"Here comes Stella," said Swift. "I will say nothing to her; I leave that to you. You know my meaning: be guided by it."

"Very good," thought Dingley. "If he says nothing, neither does he wish me to speak, I understand; he may make himself quite easy. I know what Stella is: she is so much afraid of offending her dear Presto, that she would very likely take him at his word."

She accordingly said nothing; and Swift, after watching Stella, began to fear that the evil was more serious than he had supposed. There was no better cure than absence, so he accepted the mission which had been offered him.

"Very good," thought Dingley; "he is going to fetch his bishopric."

Days and weeks passed, however, and he did not go; and yet there was nothing to hinder him: he had got his powers, and Tisdal only awaited his orders to come and take his place at Laracor.

"Very good again," thought Dingley: "he is jealous; he does not like to go, because his departure must bring us back Doctor Tisdal. Stella has refused him, it is true; but she is so young, who knows that she might not change her mind? Poor Presto! I wonder does he think me simple enough to have taken him at his word? Lord knows, he may go away, and leave us without fear."

But for the preceding scene, Dingley would have been tempted to tell him so.

There was no need, however. At length Swift went of his own accord. The Archbishop of Dublin was dead; *the Bishop of Meath* had succeeded him, and had appointed *Tisdal Canon of Dublin Cathedral*, and another neigh-

bouring Curate, Doctor Warburton, was to do the duty at Laracor.

"Very good!" thought Dingley. "We shall certainly have our bishopric."

CHAPTER XIV.

SWIFT was going to London upon a very honourable mission, and one from which he might promise himself much personal advantage; nevertheless, on leaving Stella he felt a sadness which even this brilliant prospect was unable to dispel. Poor child! so young a head is soon turned! She was all in tears when she bid him farewell. How would she bear the hard trial of absence?

His regret strengthened as the distance increased; when he got to London, it turned into self-reproach. Had not he left her too suddenly? She was so tender a creature in heart and in health, had he dealt with her as gently as he ought? In order to assuage the sorrow which he accused himself of having caused her, his first care on arriving was to write to her, promising to send her every week an exact journal of all his doings, in order, as much as possible, to lessen the pain of separation. Esther, on her part, had not waited for his letter in order to write to him, and he soon received a letter in a hand-writing that made his heart beat quick.

It was dated from Laracor. Tisdal's successor lived in another parish, and was not to inhabit Swift's parsonage; and, at Dingley's instigation, Stella had asked Presto's leave to lodge there during his absence. They would keep his house in order, they would be more comfortable than at Trim, and would have no rent to pay. Stella rejoiced in the idea of dwelling beneath the roof of her dear Presto, and Beck in that of dwelling under any roof but her own. Swift saw no reason for refusing them this change. He had no idea that Dingley, in her obstinate self-delusion, looked upon his hospitality as an engagement to Stella—a sort of foretaste of marriage—and that she had represented it to Stella in that light.

The latter wrote him word that they had already removed. How unlike Trim, how much larger, and prettier, and more cheerful! Instead of a nasty brick wall, here was a little river, edged with willows, and full of trout and eels. Beck was delighted; she now spent the whole day in fishing. Let the weather be what it would—sun, or wind, or rain—she always established herself on the island with her fishing-tackle. The sport was too cruel for Stella. It was in vain that Beck assured her that fish were cold-blooded animals, and could not feel; Stella had seen them gasping on the turf, and would not believe her; so at dinner Dingley was forced to eat alone what she alone had caught.

Stella, too, was vastly busy. In the first place she had two sets of poultry to take care of instead of one, for she had not been able to part from her feathered children, and she had plenty to do, especially for Swift's fowls, which were so thin! But she would take care that by the time he came back he should not know them again.

Then she looked after Presto's flowers; and he had so many that she could not stir without her hoe. In the evening they received or visited the people with whom Presto had brought them acquainted, and played cards—not Beck; she did not like cards now. Since they had come to Laracor she passed her evenings in reading the newspaper and talking politics.

Altogether Stella was very glad to be at Laracor; she had plenty to amuse her there, and she wanted nothing but her dear Presto to be quite happy.

All these details were from the pen of Stella. Either from laziness, love of fishing and politics, or from fear lest Swift should doubt her sincerity, Dingley had let her write the whole letter, and had added only a few lines, desiring Swift to give them a full account of public affairs in his letters.

After reading all this good news, Swift said to himself: "I did quite right in coming away; she is a mere child, consoled by the veriest trifle."

This reflection should have restored his good humour; *nevertheless*, he woke the next morning just as morose as *he had been the evening before*. He laid it upon the fog,

upon the London smoke, upon his lodging, which was so dull and uncomfortable compared with his country quarters. But he was not a Sybarite, and these were petty annoyances to which one gets accustomed in a couple of days. His sadness must have some more serious cause. It could not be about Stella,—she was happy enough. An anxious thought crossed his mind. What if it were sad on his own account—if the habit of living with Stella were stronger than he had imagined—if his love for her were less paternal than he thought.

“What an idea! a child, whose father I might be! But why then did I treat Tisdal so scurvily? Gad! because he did not suit her. And why?—was it his age, or his fortune?—was it his heart or intellect?”

He remained for some time buried in thought; his head resting on his hands, then suddenly starting up: “No! a hundred times no! It is that fool Dingley, who, by dint of talking and meddling, crams these absurdities into the heads of us all.”

He had risen with the firm resolution to drive away all such thoughts, and accordingly, often as they returned, he invariably banished them from his mind. But though pride did not suffer him to own his weakness to himself, he did more than own it—he strove to conquer it. His actions avowed what his words denied; he refused to confess, but he did penance. He resolved, henceforth, to devote his whole time to his mission and to his own advancement.

He had been very well received by the Lord Treasurer. On his third audience, the latter had announced to him that the petition of the Irish clergy was granted; there would be no further delays beyond those required by the forms of office. Swift, therefore, now had full leisure to attend to his own interests, and he had no need to do violence to the natural haughtiness of his temper, as all the advances were upon the side of the ministry. They had read his works and wanted his pen; they behaved like men of tact, and treated him on a footing of equality.

This was an infallible method of winning over his proud and independent spirit: flattered by such a reception from men so high in station, whose talents and char-

racter he admired, and whose opinions he shared, Swift devoted himself to their cause; and the ministers soon had reason to congratulate themselves upon having chosen him as an exponent of their views.

Such substantial services deserved a substantial reward, they talked of making him a Bishop. This would place him in the House of Lords, where his eloquence would be very useful; but no See was then vacant. Meanwhile, as a step towards it, they promised to present him to the Queen and to manage that he should preach before her.

Faithful to his promise, Swift, in his journal, hastened to communicate this good news to Stella. But time passed on, and none of these promises were realised.

The ministers were more than ever profuse of their caresses, their friendship, their familiarity; Swift was not only their advocate, but their adviser, and frequently even their arbitrator. He was on the most intimate terms with them, quite one of the family; he was freely admitted at all times and in all places. If by chance he went to a minister's levée, the minister left every one to speak to Swift; he was told that was no place for friends to come to; he was continually teased with messages and invitations; he was called by his Christian name, "my dear Jonathan." But the Queen did not give him the promised audience, and there was no more talk of his preaching before her, nor had she yet even signed the warrant, granting the first fruits and twentieth parts.

From time to time Swift wondered what could be the reason of all these delays; but the ministers always had so much business on their hands; the Lord Treasurer never could conclude anything; that was his failing, and then no bishopric had fallen in.

At length one did become vacant; the Bishop of Hereford died. The ministers were the first to tell him of it, and he no longer doubted of promotion. However, the same delays recurred, and after several months of suspense, some one else was nominated.

Swift's first impulse was to give way to his anger, and to throw up the whole affair in disgust; but he had time to reflect, and restrained his passion. How could he return to Laracor, leaving the object of his mission unful-

filled, and with the mortification of not having obtained any preferment? The ministers overwhelmed him with excuses; they told him that his successful rival had been forced upon them. This disappointment gave Swift an additional claim upon them; why then spoil everything by violence? True or false he must accept their excuses.

These excuses were sincere. If Swift was not a Bishop, he had himself to thank for it. His imprudent zeal and the vehemence of his writings had made him a powerful and irreconcilable enemy at Court.

Freed from the despotic sway of the Duchess of Marlborough, Queen Anne had determined in future to divide her affections; and she had chosen a whig favourite in the person of the Duchess of Somerset, to counterbalance her new tory favourite, Mrs. Masham.

Swift, irritated by the continual obstacles which the Duchess threw in the way of the Government, had attacked her in an anonymous satire. On learning who was the author, the Duchess had thrown herself, bathed in tears, at the feet of her royal mistress. Making heaven a party to her revenge, she described the culprit as an atheist, who outraged religion in his writings; and as Swift was by no means mealy-mouthed, the Duchess had found little difficulty in alarming the conscience of the Queen, and paralysing the efforts of her rival and of the ministers.

The latter were greatly embarrassed. If all this were explained to Swift, it could not fail to dishearten him, and send him back to Ireland; which would rob them of an indispensable ally. They accordingly temporised, hoping to overcome the repugnance of the Queen. Swift, on his part, took patience, for other reasons. But though he avoided a rupture, he thought that he ought to show some coldness, so as to make them feel that if they did not take more pains to keep him, they would lose him in the end.

Moreover, he was tired of the trade of a pamphleteer, and of the fine promises of the Court. He sighed for a change of scene; at each fresh annoyance he felt a return of sadness: he was tormented by a constant longing after *Laracor*, and rest from the worry of London; by desire to

see once more his brook, his willows, and her who walked beneath their shade: these were thoughts fatal to his duties, to his interests, to his repose, and which he must endeavour to drive away.

During his stay in London, he had been exclusively occupied with politics, he now remembered that he was also an author; and he began to seek the society of his brethren, and to frequent the taverns and coffee-houses which were the resort of the wits. How delightful, he thought, to form a friendship with the authors whose works he admired, to exchange thoughts with them, to feed his enthusiasm with their interesting conversation! and then what a noble use of his credit, to employ it in behalf of so needy, deserving, and neglected a class!

But spite of the many important services which he rendered them, one fine day he found himself, thanks to those interesting conversations on which he had reckoned so much, surrounded by a host of enemies. What! while he might speak his mind to the Queen's ministers, he was not to dare to do so to the men of letters! He declared himself their very humble servant, bought their books, and stayed at home to admire them in peace.

But no sooner was he alone, than he was again assailed by his recollections and regrets. The diversions he had sought had feebly palliated the evil, and had only served to prove to him a very unwelcome truth, namely, that if Stella was thus ever present to his thoughts, he must certainly be in love with her. After so many trials, he could no longer contest the evidence of his own feelings; but driven out of one entrenchment his pride took refuge in another.

"Well," said he, "I own it is love that I feel—I have been imprudent and weak—yes, weak! for it is weakness to shut one's eyes, and, like a frightened child, to hide one's head under the bed-clothes. A strong man meets the danger face to face, struggles with it, and overcomes it. I have been a dolt—I have increased the evil by denying its existence. It is love—but what if I stifle it! Is it not better to conquer than to shrink from the struggle? Oh, yes! I will stifle this absurd passion: it is *my duty*—for her sake and for mine! Her love is a mere

childish whim, which will pass away like all the whims and all the pleasures proper to her age: mine will pass away like every other weakness of a strong man, by the exercise of a powerful will."

Like a physician who feels himself attacked by a serious illness, he had examined himself with perfect coolness, and had defined his own disease. All that remained was to apply the remedy. Hitherto, he had been imperfectly guided by instinct only. No doubt the best thing was to spread out, and divide among twenty different objects, the feelings which were now concentrated upon one. But the heart cannot be cured by acting upon the intellect. Swift loved the society of women, and he resolved to seek in it a wholesome diversion.

His growing fame, and above all his well-known credit at Court, threw open every drawing-room to him: he only had to choose. Everybody had got some favour to ask, and the ladies fought for his company. Surrounded and courted by agreeable women, Swift found his method of cure very bearable. He was not among those who think that no medicine can be efficacious that is not bitter and nauseous. He accordingly allowed himself to be petted, coaxed, and flattered, until he was fairly cloyed with sweets. He was tired of hearing fine words and seeing fashionable contortions. How far inferior were those studied airs and pretentious manners to the simple grace of his good little Stella. And then the cloven foot of self-interest always peeped out, even with the richest and highest in rank, who distinguished themselves from their inferiors only by the magnitude and shamelessness of their requests. Cured of all illusions, he determined to make no more new acquaintances, and to narrow the circle of his old ones day by day.

At first the difficulty of getting at him increased the desire for his society which he wished to lessen, his reserve made him more interesting, and all the ladies strove for the honour of taming the wild boar of Laracor. But the wild boar showed his tusks with such effect that they were driven back. After a handsome Duchess had made advances in vain, none dared to aspire to success, *and even his chosen friends scarce ventured to accost him.*

Nevertheless, to his great surprise, he was one evening accosted by a perfect stranger. The lady was no longer young—she was at least fifty, and she was not a Duchess; she was the widow of a Dutch merchant. It is true, that by dint of an ostentatious manner of living, and a knack of pushing herself in society, she mixed with the best company in London. She had returned to town since Swift had come to the determination of making no new acquaintances, and had therefore lost the golden opportunity. But she felt that she must be in the fashion: she had a son whom she wished to push in the army, a daughter of twenty to marry, and was so much absorbed in her family that she could not conceive it possible that any one would refuse to second her pious efforts. No one would undertake to introduce her to Swift; but she was a mother, and she boldly attacked the wild boar of Laracor. Possibly she remembered the lion of Florence.

When she addressed him, Swift did not believe his own ears; and assuming that she had mistaken his person, he answered very drily: "Madam, my name is Doctor Swift."

"And mine, Mrs. Vanhomrigh."

She took Swift's rebuke as an advance; he had come half-way to meet her, and she hastened to do her part. He was struck dumb by surprise.

"I find," she continued, "that you inspire such jealous friendships that one is obliged to introduce oneself."

"May I ask, Madam, what would you have of me?"—"Oh dear me, nothing very important: only promise not to refuse me."

"No, Madam, I never promise, not knowing what. What is it you want?"—"I have an assembly on the fourteenth, and I shall be very glad of your company."

"Madam, I neither sing nor dance, and I only talk to my own friends."

"I know how you dislike the great world and you are quite right; there is nothing like the society of a few intimate friends; but my assembly is quite a quiet little party; it is neither a ball nor a concert, but a family gathering; it is to celebrate the birthday of my eldest daughter, who is one of your greatest admirers, so much

so, that I cannot think of a pleasanter surprise for her than your presence."

"I did not think, Madam, that I looked much like a birthday gift."

"Oh, charming! charming!" she cried, resolved to admire everything. "It is impossible to be more witty. So you will come?"—"No, Madam, I am here upon business, and have no time to spare for my pleasures."

"But think of ours, Doctor, of those of a handsome girl, who knows all your works by heart. You would not wish that she should have to regret your absence."

"On the contrary, Madam, I do not choose to increase my own regret at leaving London."

"Really, Doctor, you are too polite. But are you going soon?"—"Yes, Madam."

"To Ireland?"—"Yes, Madam."

"That gives me an additional reason for pressing my suit. I am your countrywoman. The late Mr. Vanhomrigh was contractor for the army of King William, during the civil war in Ireland, and indeed my eldest daughter has an estate ten miles from Dublin. You must know it—Marley Abbey, near Celbridge, it must be close by you."—"I don't know it."

"Really. It is very picturesque; a large building, not very convenient, like all those old places. But, however, I like Ireland highly; and the hope of finding you there will be a fresh attraction."

Such a hope amounted to a threat. Swift hastened to abuse Ireland, which he said he should leave as soon as possible; but Mrs. Vanhomrigh was resolved to follow him wheresoever he should go.

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say so—yes. Isn't England a much nicer place? That's just like my daughter, she can't bear Ireland. And when I tell her what you say, she'll like it still less. For, as I told you before, she swears only by you. What a fine thing it is to be a man of genius. One has a number of friends about the world whom one does not know."

"I presume, Madam, that among the number there are many that one is happy in not knowing."

"Oh, yes! to be sure. There are people who have a

way of admiring that is enough to make one sick; but I'm not blind, though I am a mother, and you shall see my daughter. I need say no more."

"Humph!" said Swift to himself, "a blue stocking, I suppose; a little prodigy?"

"Well, Doctor, you won't forget the day—the fourteenth?"—"No, Madam, I won't forget it; it will be engraved upon my memory by regret."

"Oh, Doctor! but you promised to come; you must not retract, and disappoint my Esther."

Swift was on the point of getting into a passion, but the name of Esther softened him like magic, and he let Mrs. Vanhomrigh take leave of him without giving her an answer. However, after a moment's reflection, he laughed at his own folly, and determined not to give way to the importunities of this tiresome gossip.

When he got home he found a letter from Stella. She was much less cheerful, and began to think Presto's absence was very long, and to ask him when he was coming back. This letter, Mrs. Vanhomrigh's entreaties, and the name of Esther, pursued him in his sleep, and produced in his mind one of those confusions so common in dreams. He was at Laracor, and yet at Mrs. Vanhomrigh's assembly. She introduced him to her daughter, who was dark, pale, and slender, just like Stella. She was Esther Vanhomrigh and Esther Johnson, both at once.

"What a ridiculous dream!" said he, when he woke. "But how she runs in my head—there she is ever present. The least thing—a mere name—is enough. Alas! I am not yet cured."

CHAPTER XV.

NEXT day he was paying a visit at some house where he had promised to go, when Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh was announced.

"So, I'm entrapped!" said he to himself.

He had a great mind to go away; but was restrained

by curiosity. The young lady who now entered the room was tall, fair, somewhat fat—in short, utterly unlike what he had seen in his dream. He was disagreeably surprised.

After the first compliments, the mistress of the house, knowing that Swift and Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh were not acquainted, introduced them to each other; and Swift was prepared to undergo a fresh persecution. But Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh never alluded to the assembly of the fourteenth. He liked her the better, and examined her with greater attention. She moved and talked with an ease which showed considerable knowledge of the world; at the same time, she could not be said to have the manners of a fine lady. It was manifest from her behaviour that she took no model for her imitation. It was the same with her dress, which was not precisely the fashion; and yet no one could deny that it was in excellent taste, and became her perfectly. Dress and manner denoted independence of character; her reserve was not shyness. Swift was soon so far tamed, that he even mentioned the invitation he had received.

"My mother asked you to come!" exclaimed Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh. "I dare not say anything before her. But pray, Sir, relieve my uneasiness, and grant that maternal love is respectable even in its errors."

Swift had no notion of any worldly love, maternal or filial, with a bandage over its eyes. But Mrs. Vanhomrigh now seemed to him much less blind than he had supposed. And as to Mrs. Esther, her clear-sightedness and frankness did honour to her intellect, without detriment to her heart. There was but one fear that still haunted him about her: Swift hated pedantry, especially at twenty, and in petticoats. Was she not a pedant? He contrived, without affectation, to give the conversation a turn, which at once enabled him to judge.

Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh readily answered the questions he put to her; then addressing Swift, with a smile: "You have heard my mother talk about me; but don't be deceived. There is no ink on my fingers." So saying, she pulled off her glove, and showed a pretty little *white and pink hand*.

"It would be a pity there should," replied Swift, kissing it.

"Doctor," said she, "now that I have passed my examination, don't let me pine in suspense. Am I accepted?"—"You are."

"And you will come on the fourteenth?"—"And I will come on the fourteenth."

"Thank you. I must go."

"Wait a moment, my dear," said the mistress of the house, seeing her rise from her seat. "Didn't your brother promise to come and fetch you?"

"My brother! Heaven preserve me from ever depending upon him!"

"You have a brother?" said Swift.—"Did not my mother mention him to you? So much the better."

"Why?"—"Because you have been sufficiently undeceived for to-day."

"I don't think your mother so bad a judge."—"Oh! but I am worth more than he."

"One may be worth less than you, and yet be very well worth knowing. Stay here till he comes, or I shall believe that you dread the comparison."

"I? Oh no! I'm not jealous, but vain of him; and I do not wish you to see him here. He is a captain in the army, and looks very well in uniform; I will show him to you at a review."

"You treat him as you do yourself. I see you are not given to puffing. But take care, one may tell falsehoods from sheer frankness."

"No, no, I say what I think; but don't fancy that I don't love him. I love him in my own way. I might very easily act the tender sister, and paint him to you in glowing colours. But you, who have good eyes, would soon find him out; and it's just as well that I should prepare you: you will be less hard upon him."

Nothing could have pleased Swift better than this off-hand manner and decided character. He did not fail to go to her birthday assembly on the fourteenth.

"And where is your brother?"—"He is not here."

"How! on your birthday."—"Neither on my birthday nor on any other day."

"Come, you are determined that I shall not see him."

"Do you wish to see him?"—"Of course I do."

"What, really?"—"Yes, really."

"And will you do whatever is required for that?"—

"I will do whatever you like."

"Well, then, sup with us to-morrow."—"What! is he only to be seen at supper?"

"At supper, at dinner, or at breakfast, whichever you please, but it must be at table. My brother knows only two rooms in the whole house—his own chamber and the dining-room: he has never set foot in the others. So now you are forewarned, and if you're as good as your word, you will come to-morrow."

Swift smiled without answering.

"Well, will you come? Oh, I dare say you don't think yourself sufficiently invited, because you're invited by me. But make your mind easy: I am the head of the family. I take after my father, and I fill his place. He governed my mother so absolutely, that she does not know what it is to have a will of her own. My brother is always out, Lord knows where! my sister is too young—she is only eleven; and but for me, I don't know what would become of them all."

"And are not you sometimes at a loss how to use your power?"—"Never! I have a head upon my shoulders. Whatever you may think, I'm a very good man of business."

This explanation overcame all Swift's scruples. He boldly acted upon her invitation the next day, and not only for the sake of meeting Captain Vanhomrigh. Mrs. Esther had been guilty of no exaggeration. When they entered the dining-room they found the Captain established there, and he left it the moment supper was over. But short as the time was, he found means fully to confirm his sister's account of him.

As to her, Swift found the favourable opinion which he had formed of her more and more borne out. The manly virtues which he prized so highly lost none of their value by being found in a handsome young woman of twenty. Her mind and character offered many points of resemblance with his. Both hated ceremony, and their friend-

ship advanced with rapid strides. Swift went into the world less and less every day. All the trifling duties and so-called pleasures of society were so tedious, when compared with the delights of friendship. And then it was such a convenient house of call for him, they were almost next-door neighbours. He could not leave his own lodging without passing theirs, and how could he pass without going in ; and when he was once got in, how was he to get away ? They were so vexed if he tried to go, and he so little wished it himself. Thus it was seldom that a day passed on which he had not the pleasure of spending an hour in the company of the Captain, either in the morning or evening, and sometimes both.

Mrs. Vanhomrigh had very little influence ; but she made the most of what she had. The friendship between Swift and her daughter needed no encouragement, so she thought how she could turn it to the best advantage. She could not hope always to have a man of letters for an intimate friend, and it would be a pity to let slip so fine an opportunity of perfecting Esther's education. With the assistance of a few little acts of maternal treachery, she forced her daughter to confide her literary efforts to the Doctor, who repaid the confidence with advice and encouragement ; and one fine day Swift found himself unawares, but by no means unwillingly, gratuitously acting as tutor to the most intelligent and industrious of scholars.

But though his scholar, he soon found she was no beginner ; and she won from him the consideration due to her advancement in learning. He kept up a literary correspondence with her ; he addressed verses to her, which she returned in kind. She, like the other Mrs. Esther, received from him a poetical name. Joining the first syllable of her surname with the diminutive of Esther, Hussy, he called her Vanessa.

The doating mother was intoxicated with delight at seeing her daughter the object of such invaluable attentions, and distinguished in so flattering a manner. But she did not forget that Swift, though a man of genius, was *at the same time something far greater*—the friend of the *ministers*. The Captain was so dissolute and so careless

that there was no reason why he should ever get promotion; except by favour, and even Esther must surely be aware that she would make a much better marriage if she could bring her husband some comfortable place under Government as a marriage portion. But young girls have so little forethought: their delicacy is so excessive, their discretion is so ill-timed; and yet, however glorious might be the name of Vanessa, a countess's coronet was not to be despised.

But it was not Vanessa alone who neglected her more serious interests to indulge so delightful an intimacy. Swift was no less careless. It was in vain that the ministers reproached him for his silence; in vain that the booksellers besieged his door: the whigs had time to breathe. He wrote only for Vanessa.

But if Swift's absorption was regretted in London, what was it at Laracor? Poor Stella! At first she had regularly received good long letters; now they were few and far between, the writing was more diffuse, the paper smaller, and, small as it was, never filled.

Swift's conscience was not alarmed, although he answered all complaints evasively. He had such excellent reasons to give! But he did not choose to tell the ministers in so many words that, before he rendered them any fresh services, he expected a reward for those he had already performed, and still less could he explain his conduct to Stella.

In his first letters to Stella, he had entered into the minutest details, and had addressed her in the most affectionate tone, in order to console her as much as possible for the grief of separation. Perhaps, thought he, he had carried his solicitude almost too far. At all events there could be no reason for giving encouragement to feelings which it was necessary to destroy. It was, therefore, his duty to wean her from him by degrees; and as he had determined that absence would be useful in this respect, it was likewise advisable to estrange himself from her by degrees in his letters, until such time as his return and his affection should have ceased to be dangerous to her.

"So time hangs heavy on hand with her, does it?" said

he to himself one morning, while writing to Laracor. "Why doesn't she study? But the older she grows, the more childish she becomes. She was ten times less so while I was with her! Poor dear little rogue! I don't blame her: it's not her fault; it's all that scatter-brained Dingley! That noodle has infected her with all her own defects—her laziness, her superstition, and even her bad spelling! Would anybody think it possible that, after all the pains I have taken with her, the little chit still makes blunders in spelling! It's enough to make one give up in despair. 'Tis in vain that I mark them all to shame her; she hasn't sense enough to blush at her own ignorance! My rebukes don't make her angry; she thanks me for them; but, as for correcting herself, that's quite another thing. I'd bet anything that creature Dingley calls me a pedant; but good spelling is to style what cleanliness is to beauty: there's no such thing without it. That's one of the things that sickened me the most of writing to Laracor: not to mention that they both write letters so empty, so childish, it's a perfect torture to be always forced to stoop to their level. I had rather write ten letters in prose or verse to another woman than a single one to such simpletons."

As he was sealing his letter his Irish servant, Patrick, came in and asked: "Is your honour writing to the ladies?" and would your honour be so good as to send a little parcel to Madam Dingley?"

"What is it?"—"Something she told me to buy for her," said Patrick, feeling in his pocket. "The almanac for the new year."

"What almanac?"—"The famous Partridge's almanac."

"Partridge's? Give it me."

He took the almanac, tossed it into the fire, and, giving Patrick his letter in return, he took him by the shoulders and pushed him out of the room.

"Ah, Partridge! burn, you scoundrel," said he, watching with satisfaction the book as it crackled and twisted in the fire. "Infamous quack! If I could but do the same *by you: and why shouldn't I?* To destroy one copy is *nothing*. I must dry up the poisoned source, and cure

Stella of her credulous folly. I'll be revenged on the rascal, I'm determined!"

When Patrick came back from the Treasury, through which office Swift's letters were sent, he found his master's door locked, in token that Swift was at work, and not to be disturbed. Patrick had no intentions of the kind; he was quite of the same mind as the ministers and the booksellers, and liked to see the Doctor busy. He went as usual to the neighbouring pot-house, whence he maintained—Heaven only knows why! that he could hear his master's bell; not perhaps the first time, when it rang gently, but always the violent peal which followed soon after.

Patrick stayed at the pot-house till dinner-time, and he might have stayed longer, for Swift did not dine, or indeed open his door again, except to go to sup at Mrs. Vanhomrigh's.

A few days after, Patrick heard the hawkers crying in the street: "Predictions for the year 1708. Wherein the month, and the day of the month, are set down, the persons named, and the great actions and events of the next year particularly related, as they will come to pass. Written to prevent the people of England from being further imposed on by the vulgar almanac-makers."

As Patrick had been prevented from executing Mrs. Dingley's commission, he seized this opportunity of making up for it, ran down and stopped the hawker.

"How much is it?"—"A penny, Sir."

"It is Partridge's: is it not?"—"No such thing, indeed. Partridge is an impostor."

"You don't say so!"—"Yes, Sir: the true prophet this year is Isaac Bickerstaff. He makes no little trifling predictions—not he. He promises you the death of the Pope, the death of the King of France, the death of the Cardinal of Noailles, Archbishop of Paris: and better than all, Sir, he fortels the death of that ignorant impostor, Partridge, who doesn't even know what is hanging over him."

"What! is Partridge going to die? and when?"—"On the twenty-ninth of next March, at eleven o'clock at night."

"You don't say so!"—"Read it yourself."

Patrick could not read, but he eagerly bought the broadside, and added it, on his own private authority, to the very next packet he had to take to the Treasury. He now understood Swift's indignation. It was clear that he had requested him to send a bad almanac to Mrs. Dingley, who was so learned in such matters.

Dingley was quite upset on receiving this paper, though her faith in Partridge made her very incredulous. However, she thanked Patrick for his attention, and begged him to ascertain exactly whether the first prediction as to the death of Partridge did actually come true on the 29th of March at eleven o'clock at night.

Patrick, who did not attach so much importance to this event as Mrs. Dingley, had forgotten her charge, when one day, as he was sitting at his accustomed pot-house, he again heard them crying in the street: "The accomplishment of the first part of Mr. Bickerstaff's predictions, being an account of the death of Mr. Partridge, the almanac-maker, upon the 29th instant."

This was the very answer which Mrs. Dingley had asked for. Patrick laid out another penny, and returned to the pot-house, in order to get the broadside read to him.

This was a letter, written by some anonymous correspondent, worthy of belief, to a person of honour. This person of honour had felt the same curiosity as Dingley, and he was now told, that in obedience to his orders Partridge the almanac-maker had been constantly inquired after, that he had been seen once or twice about ten days before he died, and that it had been observed that he began very much to droop and languish, though his friends did not seem to apprehend him in any danger. But in about two or three days after that he grew ill, was confined first to his chamber, and in a few days after that to his bed, when Dr. Case and Mr. Kirleus were sent for to visit and to prescribe to him. On this intelligence, the correspondent had sent there every day to inquire after Partridge's health, and when word was brought him "that he was past hopes," this correspondent had prevailed with himself to go and see him, partly out of commiseration, *partly out of curiosity*. He had been for some time

delirious, but when seen, had his understanding about him, and spoke strong and hearty.

He was asked "whether the predictions Mr. Bickerstaff had published relating to his death had not too much affected and worked upon his imagination." He confessed "he had often had it in his head, but never with much apprehension, till about a fortnight before; since which time it had the perpetual possession of his mind and thoughts, and he did verily believe was the true and natural cause of his distemper. For," he added, "I am thoroughly persuaded that Mr. Bickerstaff spoke altogether by guess, and knew no more what will happen this year than I do."

He continued, "that although a poor ignorant fellow, bred to a mean trade, he had sense enough to know that all pretences of foretelling by astrology are deceits. And that this was no time for jesting, but for repenting those fooleries—the observations and predictions were mere impositions on the people, to make his almanac sell, having a wife to maintain, and no other way to get his bread. "For mending old shoes is a poor livelihood," said he, adding, "I wish I may not have done more mischief by my physic than my astrology; though I had some good receipts from my grandmother, and my own compositions were such, as I thought would at least do no hurt."

The narrative ends with the death of Partridge; but it was not at the hour predicted by Mr. Bickerstaff, he was mistaken about four hours in his calculation.

When the letter had been read, Patrick, much edified, carefully folded up the precious document, and sent it to Mrs. Dingley, through the same channel as he had sent the former parcel.

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. VANHOMRIGH was not merely expressing a vague regret when she wondered how her daughter could prefer the name of Vanessa to the title of Countess. She *actually* had an Earl in view, with a peerage, fifteen thousand

a year, twenty-seven years of age, a good face and figure, and no fool; in short, an incomparable match, to which nothing was wanting save the consent of the two persons concerned. For Vanessa was exclusively devoted to her studies, and the Earl to the care of his health, which he feared the fever of love might impair.

He had not always been so prudent—while he was a sailor no one was so careless as he. Then he was always ready to risk his life or his heart on the rocks and shoals of the ocean or the world. But then he was only endangering a poor devil of a midshipman, who little thought that he was to inherit the title and estate of Lord Rivers.

He expected it so little, that surprise threw him into a severe fit of sickness. What a mockery of fortune! To have vegetated until then, and only to have become rich, and an Earl and a peer of the realm, in order to die. In despair he made a vow, in case he should recover; it was not a pilgrimage to our Lady at Loretto, or St. James of Compostella; he was a good Protestant, and held no such Popish superstitions. He merely vowed to maintain, by every means in his power, the excellent position of which death threatened to deprive him.

His prayer was heard; and, to his credit it must be admitted, that his conduct did not resemble that of so many travellers, who, when they had reached the port, forget the vow extorted from them by fear during the storm. He was faithful to his; so faithful, that no consideration in the world, either of gallantry, politeness, or decorum, could make him depart from it. He continued, after his recovery, all the precautions by which he had been surrounded during convalescence.

He was wrapped in flannel from head to foot, and lived in perpetual fear of draughts and damps. To drive in a coach was a rashness of which he never was guilty—he was always carried in a chair, and in it he kept a thermometer and an assortment of wigs, in order to change them according to the variations of the temperature. When he visited any one, instead of saying: “How do you do?” *he thoroughly examined the room; he shut the windows, he shut the doors, he shut the very cupboards.* People

might laugh at him if they pleased; might accuse him of monomania, or of cowardice, but no one should ever be able to accuse him of imprudence.

Such was the son-in-law elect of Mrs. Vanhomrigh. Selfishness, it is true, hardens the heart; but if that of Lord Rivers had been of stone, her maternal perseverance would have softened it by degrees. Her tact was perfect. She did not tell him he looked ill—that would have alarmed him; she did not tell him that he looked well—that is unlucky. She never mentioned his health to him at all. She took good care not to treat him like an invalid. She never offered him the best seat or surrounded him with screens; but in her drawing-room all the seats were comfortable, all the doors and windows shut well, and the temperature was always the same.

Her own health was so delicate!

When once Lord Rivers had got accustomed to the house, the next thing was to give him a taste for marriage. Mrs. Vanhomrigh presented it to him in the form of a prescription. In this attractive picture the bride figured as a doctor, the mother-in-law as a sick nurse; and in the background, a group of little cupids were employed, not in sharpening their arrows, piercing hearts, or stirring up flames—such images are exciting and unwholesome—but in distilling cordials, making gruel and warming slippers.

A wedding, which seemed as if it ought to be celebrated in an apothecary's shop, could not be contrary to any regimen, and there was great reason to hope that Lord Rivers would at last reward the daughter for the court paid him by the mother. Love was out of the question. But he came every day, and usually he talked to Esther—poor Mrs. Vanhomrigh's chest was so weak! And usually, moreover, his conversation was whispered in her ear—poor Mrs. Vanhomrigh's nerves were so shattered! Everything was going on favourably, when suddenly Lord Rivers—we should say Mrs. Vanhomrigh—encountered a troublesome rival in the field.

Nothing could have been more unexpected. Sir Archibald Stapleford had known Esther from her childhood, and had never addressed a word of gallantry to her before. *But there are birds who only like to lay in the nests of*

others; and the attentions of Lord Rivers had provoked this competition.

The Baronet's nature was a strange one. He was everything and nothing. His characteristic was to have no character at all. His soul was always in disguise. It was like a looking-glass, which only received life from what was reflected in it. But the looking-glass was one in which all objects called forth a reflection unlike themselves—a contrast or an equivalent, according as his interest happened to dictate. Rivers was selfish and pusillanimous, and, therefore, Stapleford assumed the part of courage and devotion.

It was a very unfavourable contrast. Lovers have often been compared to huntsmen. If so, Stapleford's love was a full chase, with hounds, horses, tallyho, red coats, ditches and five-barred gates, and the country folks turning out to see the show. Before his arrival, Rivers might indeed have passed for a sportsman in ambush, silently watching his prey. But now he could barely be compared to a patient angler.

Luckily, Esther could see nothing but her books, and all Stapleford's noise and bustle had no other effect than making an enemy of Mrs. Vanhomrigh, who undertook the defence of Lord Rivers, while he maintained a peaceful neutrality. This state of uncertainty was intolerable to a man whose motto was "conquer or die;" and Stapleford resolved to give his rival a decisive blow by proving his love to Esther beyond the possibility of a doubt.

"What could he invent? Should he drink pearls dissolved in vinegar? Lord Rivers was not stingy, and was much richer; he would dissolve twenty to Stapleford's one, provided he were excused from swallowing them. Should he snatch his fair one's glove out of the jaws of a raging lion? The thought was a bright one, and there certainly was no rivalry to be feared from Rivers. But, unluckily, the lions at the Tower were well fed, caged, and guarded. Besides, these expedients were old and hackneyed. Stapleford hit upon something far more original. He privately dressed himself in Esther's livery, one day that she was going in her coach to Hyde Park, and as it turned the corner of the street, he jumped

up behind in the place which the footman gave up to him.

He was well known in society; and every one turned to stare at him. He had not mounted the foot-board in order to look sheepish, and he boldly saluted all his friends to the right and left.

Impatient to enjoy the sight of Esther's astonishment, he jumped down and resolved to open the door of the coach the moment she reached her home. But how was he disappointed! Swift was with her in the coach, and had thus come in for a share of Stapleford's gallantry; and Esther was so deeply interested in what he was saying, that the unfortunate lover in vain put himself forward, bowed, coughed, and tried to attract her attention. She went in without having seen him.

He stood aghast, when, to complete his discomfiture, Lord Rivers came up in his chair, swathed in wraps and comforters, and staring at him in amazement through the window of his sedan.

Stapleford took to his heels, cursing his stratagem in his heart. Just fancy Marc Antony choking himself with his pearl, or Pepin le Bref eaten up by his lion! It is a fine thing to be bold and original in gallantry; but a man must succeed under pain of looking foolish. Stapleford found this to his cost when he next visited Esther.

Mrs. Vanhomrigh was no sooner rid of the Baronet, than she had fresh cause for satisfaction; she learned from Swift that the studious Vanessa no longer devoted herself to her learning so eagerly as heretofore. The Doctor attributed her diminished ardour to excessive work; but Mrs. Vanhomrigh chose rather to infer that Lord Rivers had triumphed over all his rivals, and she began to consider how she was to impress him with a sense of the sacrifice made in his favour, and of the kind of return which was expected of him.

It was necessary, however, to keep her maternal dignity, and she looked about for a skilful negotiator. She at last bethought her of the Doctor, who might very well render her such a service as this, as an instalment upon those she expected of him. The gravity of his character, the sacred-

ness of his calling in the cure of souls, made him especially fit for a messenger of love to Lord Rivers.

But no sooner was one obstacle removed, than it seemed as if Fate took pleasure in throwing another in her way. Vanessa, though very absent during her lessons, would not hear of giving them up, and Swift continued to visit her with the most exact punctuality. The only difference was that conversation had almost entirely usurped the place of study.

One morning Vanessa's master came a full hour after his time, and when she scolded him for it, he replied, with an anxious air: "Forgive me, I am only just come from Lord Treasurer; would you believe that a list of promotions is being made out, and that my name is not upon it!"

"That is too bad; and what excuse had he to offer?"—"He made a thousand protestations, to which I did not listen; and I informed him that my own affairs called me back to Ireland."

"Quite right. He will be forced to give you some satisfaction in order to keep you here."—"He must make up his mind by to-morrow, then."

"What do you mean?"—"That I am going to-morrow."

"To-morrow! you are not in earnest?"—"Indeed I am."

"But he will not have time to do anything for you."

"Then I shall go."

"What, without having got any preferment?"—"Because I have got no preferment."

"But if you give up the game you will lose it."—"On the contrary, it is my only chance for winning it. Lord Treasurer reckons too much upon my patience, and threats may be answered by promises, but deeds may perhaps call forth deeds."

Swift answered all her objections, but when a woman's heart is set upon anything she is not easily silenced.

"If you have any regard for me, you will not go!" said Esther, in a tone which went to Swift's heart.

"I shall not leave you without deep regret, Hessy, you may be assured."—"I entreat you to stay," said she, *clasping her hands.*

"It is impossible," he replied, taking both her hands in his.—"I implore you!"

"Pray do not press me?"—"You will not stay?..."

"I should like nothing better, but how can I, after what I said to Lord Treasurer?"

"Lord Treasurer! what care I for Lord Treasurer!" cried Esther. "I do not choose you should go."

This was carrying caprice and love of power rather far, but Esther was a handsome woman and a spoilt child. Swift only smiled in reply, which doubled Esther's irritation.

"No, you shall not go!" she repeated, stamping with her foot. "You shall not go. You have no heart if you do."

Big tears stood in her eyes.

"What is the matter, my dear? what is the matter?" asked Swift, unable to guess the cause of her frenzy.

"What is the matter!" she cried, "what is the matter! It is that I love you..."

Ashamed and angry at having made such a confession, she hid her face in her handkerchief and sobbed violently. Swift, transported with joy, pressed her to his heart, exclaiming: "Oh no, no, I will not go!"

Gratitude, pride, joy and love, filled his heart to bursting. They remained for a long time in silent rapture.

At length, with gentle violence, he raised the fair head, dried the beauteous eyes that were drowning him with tears, and covered her hair with kisses, while he repeated again and again: "No, Esther, I will not go! no, my beloved, I will not leave you!"

But she still wept violently, and could only utter in a voice broken by sobs: "Oh, I am mad, I must be mad!"

The arrival of a visitor tore them from their ecstasy: it was Lord Rivers. Neither of the lovers was in a state to appear, and they hastily separated.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN pursued by misfortune, we hide ourselves and take close shelter; but, on the approach of happiness, we

throw open doors and windows, hasten to meet it and to breathe it in the air through every pore. Once out in the street, Swift could not make up his mind to return to his lodging. His whole frame seemed filled with new strength; he wanted to walk, to expend some of the overflowing life with which he seemed filled—to enjoy in the face of heaven, the happiness which God had bestowed upon him.

He was loved then—loved by a girl so brilliant and so admired,—chosen, preferred, at his age, and without an effort! what a triumph of merit over youth, wealth, and rank. Dear, sweet girl! what candour, what courage! what true greatness of soul! what noble scorn of all vulgar prejudices! How immeasurable was the distance between her ingenuous frankness and the mean calculations and base schemes of the young women of fashion. This was indeed the heart he had longed for! Such love as hers might well be owned: it was not unworthy of a man!

He walked about for a long time, absorbed in rapture, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, unmindful of time and space, conscious of nothing but life and love.

On his return home, Patrick gave him a letter from Mrs. Dingley, and only got grumbled at for his pains.

Swift's thoughts had wandered so far from Laracor, that he was annoyed at being reminded of it. He stood for some minutes crushing the unopened letter in his hand, and inwardly cursing that stupid invention called a correspondence, which is simply a conversation, ill-timed and devoid of tact. But as an unread letter is always a remorse which must be shaken off, he broke the seal.

Dingley wrote word that Stella was ill; so ill, that her physician had recommended that another should be called in, and that accordingly a consultation would take place in a day or two, but that, as she herself did not choose to be responsible for the possible effects of keeping silence, she could no longer conceal from him that the pleasure of seeing Presto would be the best cure for Stella's ailments; and that, as he did not return to Ireland, he might expect them to join him almost immediately.

At this news, Swift's first impulse was one of anger against Dingley—a "meddling busy-body! This, then,

was the result of her plan ; a scatterbrain, who was always restless and discontented wherever she was. Let her come to London—she had better !”

But his anger was quickly followed by anxiety; and his paternal feelings regained the upper hand. Stella, his darling child, was sick, and he was not there to take care of her. He would go to her ; go without delay. But could he leave Vanessa, after the avowal he had received from her, after the promise he had made her? Leave her! and why, in the name of heaven? In order to go and make himself the accomplice of Dingley; to confirm Stella in the foolish fancies which had been put into her head ; to expose himself afresh to the danger from which he had fled. But then, poor child, she was ill. Suppose Dingley deceived herself? there was no danger in his presence. If, on the contrary, her report was true, absence was no remedy. Was it possible that love had made him selfish? Because he could not be a husband to Stella, was he, therefore, to deprive her of her father? Was not he bound to pity her all the more, because he loved another? Oh, there was no doubt about it ; he must go and see her. But then he should create here the very sorrows which he went to console yonder. But here everything was so different; it would be so easy to soothe Vanessa when he returned. In her case nothing was impossible ; he had made no rash declarations ; no obstacles had been raised by calumny ; Vanessa and he were free.

Free ! no obstacles ! and what was poor Stella ? No obstacles ! what then was all that made him so proud of Vanessa ? What was the just ambition of her mother ? was she not a minor and an heiress ? Should he not renew the calumnies of Kilroot and Laracor ? Should he enter this family against their will ; incite a daughter to disobedience ; become a brand of discord ? And when he had gained this unhappy victory, who was to assure him that a time would not come when Vanessa would repent having ruined her prospects by marrying a man double her own age ? That was a humiliation he was determined to avoid ; he would certainly go.

With a broken heart, but a calmer conscience, he prepared as quickly as possible for his journey. And Va-

nessa ! he could not leave London without seeing her. Both his heart and his judgment urged him to pay more regard to her feelings ; he must take back his promise, and part from her on good terms : the question was, how this was to be effected.

Vanessa's secret had been wrung from her by surprise. Possibly she regretted it. What if he gave her an opportunity of retracting her avowal ; if, on the strength of their previous familiarity, he affected to have beheld in her outburst of passion a mere friendly effusion, and to look upon his own promise as a temporary concession to the whims of a spoilt child ? This construction would palliate the imprudence into which his heart had been surprised, and his caresses would thus be made to assume a paternal character.

Thus, then, the evil was not without remedy. He summoned up all his firmness, and went straight to the Vanhomrighs ; he had hoped to find Esther alone, but her mother was not yet gone out to take her constitutional walk, in which Lord Rivers politely joined her every morning. Swift did not think it possible to let her go without mentioning the departure, which he had come on purpose to announce to her daughter. When he appeared, Esther looked embarrassed ; this he was glad to see, as it relieved him from the fear of an explosion. He announced his departure for Ireland next day.

Esther turned pale, but said nothing, and let her mother express as many regrets as she would. But when she talked of giving up her walk in order to see the last of the Doctor, Vanessa, in her usual tone of authority, sent her out in the name of the physician. And no sooner had her mother shut the door after her, than she walked straight up to Swift, and said : " You're going ? " — " Yes, Esther, I am."

" And what becomes of your promise of this morning ? "

" This morning ! " he replied, endeavouring to smile, " had you asked me something even more impossible, I should equally have promised it you. Your imagination, my dear Hussy, magnifies everything. Your wishes are absolute wants, and your sorrow is despair. In short, my dear, you're a spoilt child that must not be crossed."

"And now, then, are you not afraid to cross me?"

"I presume that by this time you have grown reasonable."—"Reasonable. The time for reason is past."

"My dear Esther, be cool, you're the dupe of your own imagination. But I know you better. Whenever you really are in love, you will not tell it. You have too much pride."

"And would you, then, have me lie?"—"Reserve is not falsehood; do not confound a duty with a fault."

"When we read Shakespeare together, you bade me admire the frankness of Juliet; and now I am frank like her, and like her, I would not for all the world retract my avowal."

"But Juliet loves Romeo; she does not love Father Laurence."—"Juliet loves Romeo, and Vanessa loves a man of genius."

"Vanessa is an enthusiast, who exaggerates her own feelings and my merit. But even if I had genius, that would be no reason for loving me."

"How! if Shakespeare were to come to life again; would any woman do ill to love him?"

"Yes, she would do ill. Men of genius are only fit to be admired. Whatever warmth glows in their soul, they bestow on their works alone; they are too proud to adore anything but fame. Even I, Esther, I who have not, I hope, more pride than I shall be able to justify, what will you say if I tell you, that I have lived to my present age, and never known what it is to love?"

He thought to discourage her by a declaration which was very nearly true. But the fond girl was enraptured at the unlooked-for idea of finding a virgin heart in the man she loved.

"Oh, I will teach you," said she.

And throwing herself on her knees before Swift, in an attitude of coaxing and entreaty, she continued:—"You have given me lessons in poetry; now it shall be my turn to teach you."

Swift had been prepared only for anger and violence; and Vanessa was so enchanting in this humble posture, that he almost gave way. A relapse would have been irremediable. He remembered this just in time, and

summoning up all the resolution and coolness that remained to him, he took hold of both her arms, more to restrain her than to draw her towards him; and in a voice, which he endeavoured to render as paternal as possible, he said to her: "I tell you what, my dear child, now you are upon your knees, I shall preach you a little sermon. If you love me, Hessy, it must be because you esteem me, and you would not wish me to lose all right to this esteem. Well! just consider a little. If I took you at your word—if I took advantage of an unguarded moment to bind your fate to mine, and destroy your mother's hopes—Great heavens! what would the world say? that I had misled you; that I had abused the confidence inspired by my age and my profession, and speculated on your enthusiasm for literature. Will you expose in my person the men of letters, whom you revere, to the sarcasms of the worldly? Shall I, known as I am by my writings, obnoxious to party hatred, above all, a clergyman—shall I give myself the air of a fortune-hunter?"

"And I! for the sake of avoiding a little foolish gossip, am I to give up the happiness of my life?"

"The happiness of to-day, my child, is often the misery of to-morrow; and what you call gossip, makes our reputation."

"Have I not often heard you say, that reputation may fall a prey to the first idler, and that it is only conscience that is our own?"

"And how do you know that mine is at ease? Ought not I have foreseen that your taste for study might betray you? My conscience, Esther, accuses me of imprudence, but it shall not reproach me with anything worse."—"You repel me then!"

"Why speak so harshly, when I give you the truest proof of my affection? Do not, Hessy, take an unfair advantage of my position. I feel that it is a very false one; but the fear of ridicule shall not make me forget my duty. Be generous, and help me to fulfil it."

"Very well!" said she, rising suddenly. "You're resolved that every sacrifice shall come from me. I am willing that it should be so. I swear to you to *subdue my heart*, and never again to outstep the boundaries

of friendship. But friendship has rights as well as love. You must promise me to stay."—"No, Esther, I must go."

"You refuse to trust me!"—"Esther, I must go!"

"But I tell you that I give you my word. Do not you think me able to keep it? Good heavens! from what you said to me just now, you cannot think that I should find it so difficult. And you have more experience than I, more penetration: you must know best. I am extravagant and capricious, used to have my own way in everything. You see, then, that you may stay without inconvenience."—"Esther, I must go!"

"But, at all events, tell me the reason. Has anything happened since this morning?"—"Esther, I repeat to you that is must be!"

"Then you decidedly refuse. Well! as you please. I do not want to keep you here by force."—And she turned her back upon him.

"She how little control you have over yourself, Esther, How can I trust your word?"—"I gave it only on one condition."

"But you will keep it unconditionally. Do be reasonable. What! because I am going to Ireland..."

"What care I where you go, if you do not return!"—"I will return as soon as I can do so with honour."

"I know very well that you will not return."

Swift had gained the victory, and could only lose by prolonging this painful dispute. He took up a book, and read, or pretended to read, until Esther's mother came home. But as soon as they were no longer alone together, he had not the courage to pass the end of his last day at a distance from her, and he strove by a thousand affectionate attentions, and by the promise of a correspondence and a future meeting to soften the pain of a separation which he himself felt in all its bitterness.

He bestowed these marks of tenderness upon her with the less scruple, as Esther, either from pride or from resignation, did not once endeavour, either by whispered entreaties, covert allusions, or supplicating looks, to make him change his determination. Even at the moment of bidding him farewell, she did not shed a tear. And it

was a great relief to Swift to think, that in quitting this wounded soul, he at any rate left her the consolation of hope.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Two days had passed since Swift left London, mounted on a fine horse, which he had named Bolingbroke, after the minister who had given it him, as the sole recompense for his services. In case any message might come for him from the ministry, he had left word where he meant to stop. He had slept the second night at the Rectory of Upper Letcombe, in Berkshire, and was about to continue his journey, when he was told that a lady wished to see him.

"A lady!" He hastened down stairs to the parlour. It was Vanessa!

"Vanessa!" Surprise and joy deprived him of all reflection. He uttered an exclamation, and ran towards her. But a moment's thought stopped him short.

"Great God! you here, Esther, you here!"—"You did not choose to stop," said she, with a bitter smile.

"And how did you come?"—"Alone."

"Alone! unhappy girl, to expose your reputation to such a degree."

"That's what I wanted. You can no longer talk to me about the expectations of my family."—"And your mother, your poor mother! What sorrow for her!"

"And mine!" cried she with a violent gesture; "who among you thinks of my sorrows?" Her lips quivered and her cheeks burned.

"Yours, Esther, are as nothing compared with those you are preparing for yourself. What will people say?"

"The truth. That I love you, and that I have followed you."

"And your honour?"—"Is in your hands."

"Yes, happily it is; it is in the hands of an honest man, in the hands of a priest, whose duty it is to bring back the lost sheep into the fold."

"No, no! it is too late! If you cast me off I am lost indeed!"

"Esther, you are not lost; you stand on the brink of a precipice, but you may yet draw back."—"Well, and if I can I will not. I am lost, I am lost—I tell you lost!"

She walked up and down the room with quick steps, filled with a sort of fierce joy, and exulting in the idea of being lost. It was of no use to reason with her, to talk to her of her interest, her duty, her family, her mother. Swift was all in all to her. He felt that it was so, and that only one resource was left to him—to talk to her of himself—to show himself selfish in order to save her; and he did not hesitate.

"And what of me?" said he. "Do you wish to ruin me too? It matters not to you that I should pass for a betrayer, for an infamous seducer; it matters not to you that I should be dishonoured! You may still repair all; it is not yet too late. But you do not choose, you would rather involve me in your ruin."

"I! I have neither the power nor the will. Cast me off. I ask no pity of you."

"I do not cast you off, Esther. I offer you my hand, to lead you back to the way of duty and reason."

"Duty! reason! Why seek all these pretexts? I took this step without your knowledge: you are free, you are prudent; consult your own interests."

"My interests!"—"Yes, your interests. I have left everything to follow you. I have sacrificed everything. You are my only hope, my sole refuge; and you repel me! Ah! you're unfeeling and ungrateful; you would have less prudence if you had more heart."

Stung by these reproaches, Swift started with a cry of indignation: it seemed as if Vanessa's frenzy were contagious.

"Ah!" cried he, "I have no heart, because I am not insane like her. I have no heart, because I do not speculate upon her extravagance. I have no heart, because I do not trample upon her honour and my own! No heart; and it is she who says it! My God! what have I done to be tortured thus?"

This explosion on the part of a man usually so reserved went to the soul of Vanessa.

"Forgive, forgive me!" cried she, throwing herself on her knees before him. "I will go, indeed I will. No one knows where I am, or even shall know. Only say that you forgive me, and I am gone."

"Forgive thee, poor distempered soul," said Swift, raising her up: "it is for me to ask pardon for all the pain I am forced to inflict."

At that very moment the door flew open with violence, and Captain Vonhomrigh burst into the room, followed by his mother.

"Here they are!" he cried, with a triumphant air.

"Yes, Madam," said Swift, "she is here: make your mind easy."

"Oh, my child!" cried Mrs. Vanhomrigh.

She was not able to say more, and would have fallen if Esther had not caught her in her arms. Swift hastened towards her; but the Captain placed himself so as to hinder him from passing, and said in a husky voice: "You may thank Heaven, Sir, that you are a parson."

"You do well to remind me of it," replied Swift. "But a truce to your threats. Your sister's good name is only endangered by your outcries." And, pushing him out of the way, he passed on.

"Keep your lessons to yourself, Doctor: we know too well what they cost."

"Now, Esther, you see," said Swift, not deigning to turn round and answer him.

"Well!" cried she, "if it has been said once, it shall not be repeated. It is I—mind—I alone, who am to blame, since it is a crime to love. He does not love me, not he: does not that satisfy you! He casts me off: does not that content you? Thank him, then, instead of accusing him."

"Unhappy wretch! have you no shame?" cried the Captain. "I renounce you. You are no sister of mine."

"The shame is in being your sister," said Esther, indignantly.—"Insolent girl!"

"My child! remember he is your elder brother—the *head of the family*."

"Let him fulfil the duties of the head of the family, then. I remember, mother, to have seen that gentleman at your table; but I do not know him."

"You're far too good, Madam, to argue with this mad girl," said the Captain. "We've had enough of this. I will have her carried out by our footmen."

Mrs. Vanhomrigh held him back.

"Have a little patience, Godfrey! Set an example of moderation to your sister."

"Madam," said Swift, who could scarce contain himself, "do you wish to put an end to all this? If you do, be kind enough to leave the room for a short time. You only irritate each other. Give her time to get calm, and I can promise you that she will listen to reason."

Mrs. Vanhomrigh approved his advice; but her son interrupted her. "Zounds, Madam! why should you make so much ado? I want no help to subdue this impudent baggage."

He was about to prove the truth of his words by main force, when his mother interposed more decisively than could have been expected. Furious at finding his authority braved, he exclaimed: "Ah! you take her part. Very well, just as you please. I will have nothing more to do with the matter."

And he left the parlour as he had entered it, slamming the door so as to shake the whole house.

Mrs. Vanhomrigh raised her eyes towards heaven and sighed; but, anxious to gloss over the violence of her son, she had recourse to a truly maternal stratagem: "Well, Doctor," said she to Swift, "we will leave you together. I put all my trust in you. Pray make this unhappy girl perceive what a wild notion she has taken into her head."

"Yes, Madam," replied Swift, leading her to the door.

At the very door she stopped short, and said: "Good gracious! who could ever have foreseen such a thing? To fall in love with you at your age! Be sure you tell her well that you are much too old for her."—"Yes, Madam."

And he got her across the threshold; but she stood in the doorway, and holding the door ajar, she went on: "Explain to her that in a few years the difference of age *will be quite shocking*; that she will be a young woman

when you are beginning to feel the infirmities of age.”—
“Yes Madam.”

“And then, above all, my dear Doctor, point out to her that you are not at all a suitable match for her.”—“Yes, Madam.”

“I have such a match in view for her—such a grand name! such a splendid fortune! and a young man, Doctor—quite a young man—a charming young man! Even if they had made you a Bishop, as they promised, it would be a madness in her to give up such a marriage for your sake.”—“Yes, Madam.”

“And then you are not a Bishop you know, Doctor.”—“No, Madam.”

Swift kept hold of the handle of the door, and shut it a little closer at each reply.

“And what’s more, you never will be a Bishop, for the Queen won’t have it.”

He was on the point of shutting the door, but he let go. “And pray, Ma’am, who told you so?”

“Who told me so?” said Mrs. Vanhomrigh, recovering the ground she had lost. “Why the Duchess of Somerset herself, who boasted that it was her doing. Oh! there is no doubt about the matter. Just think what a pretty prospect for my Esther, to be the wife of a country parson! She, who may shine at Court, to be buried alive with you in Ireland! After all the sacrifices I have made to get her a footing in the very best society, to disappoint me so! It would be too dreadful—would it not, my dear, good Doctor?”—“Yes, Ma’am.”

“And if you did but know the state of my affairs! Hussy thinks she knows it, but she does not. All that I can tell you is that she positively must not—you understand me, Doctor—must on no account cross me in my schemes.”—“Yes, Ma’am.”

“It won’t do for her to play the part of being disinterested, my dear Doctor: she is not alone in the world. Remind her that the fate of her whole family is at stake; her little sister, whom she loves so much; her brother, who is a mere sieve for money; her poor mother, who is ill—far more ill than people think—and who longs to see *them all provided for before she dies.*”

There was no end to her talk.

"Madam," interposed Swift, "all your arguments are irresistible; but you will have plenty of time to convince your daughter of their truth during your journey. At this moment, the first thing is that she should go."

And without waiting for an answer, he shut the door.

On turning towards Esther, he found her as pale and motionless as she had been flushed and agitated a short time before. He augured well of her depression, and walking slowly up and down the room, he left her to her own reflections for some minutes longer. He then approached her, and taking her hand, he said: "Well, Esther, shall we go and join your mother?"

She made no answer, but her silent assent was enough. Swift called Mrs. Vanhomrigh.

"Come, Madam, come and embrace your darling daughter."

He had not done speaking, before the poor mother held her child in her arms, and covered her with tears and kisses. The latter seemed completely stupified, and let her mother do with her as she would, apparently unconscious of everything around her. It was of no use to prolong the scene, and Swift hastened to fetch Mrs. Vanhomrigh's post-chaise. But the Captain, in his rage, had taken it without scruple, and set off to London by himself. Fortunately, the one which had brought Esther was still there, and Swift cut short the painful parting, in which Esther took no apparent share, and helped her and her mother into the chaise.

As long as it was in sight, he stood on the threshold, and followed it with his eyes. But Esther did not once look out of the window, and he saw only Mrs. Vanhomrigh, who thanked him, and waved her hand.

CHAPTER XIX.

GRIEF, like a river, has ever a tendency to fly from its source; though, like that too, it does but increase with distance. Swift made haste to pursue his journey; in

what state of mind it is not easy to guess of a man who looks upon sensibility as weakness, and who disdains tears, lamentations, sighs, and all the modes of relief which nature points out to the afflicted. Patrick, however, who more than any one, was interested in knowing the state of his master's humour, had a method of ascertaining it, which he looked upon as infallible; his experience was a weather-glass, in which sarcasm and abuse indicated *Set fair*, and silence was equivalent to *Stormy*.

Now, during the whole journey, Swift never opened his lips, except to give the most indispensable orders.

"There, now, he's sulky with me," said Patrick to himself. "And yet how is a man to leave a town like London without a glass or two too much when it's offered him?"

However, they travelled at such a rate, that Swift's silence might very well be attributed to uneasiness on the score of Mrs. Johnson's health; and Patrick reached Laracor harassed and half flayed, but tolerably easy in mind.

It was seven o'clock in the evening when Swift reached the parsonage. The month of June was drawing to a close, and Stella was sitting out in front of the house, basking, like an old woman, in the rays of the setting sun. As soon as she espied Swift, she jumped up, and cried "Presto!" as she used to do, but she no longer clapped her hands, or ran to meet him, as in old times.

Poor Stella! she was so weak, her breath was so short! Rising too quickly from her seat had made her heart beat so, that she was forced to sit down again.

"Dear, dear Stella!" cried Swift in alarm.

"It is nothing," said she, in a hollow voice. "I did not expect you so soon, and the surprise has made me quite nervous."

She laughed and cried in a breath. Her cheeks were pale, her face drawn, and her eyes bigger than ever. Swift asked for Dingley. "Fishing, I suppose, on the island?"

"Oh, no! she has left off fishing for a long time."

"I ought to have guessed as much! And how does *she employ her time now, pray? Does she still read Partridge?*"

"Partridge! What, don't you know, Presto? Partridge was a liar!"—"Really."

"Oh, no doubt. Conceive that after pretending to know everything, he died without having foreseen it."

"You don't say so! And what said Beck to that?"—"She is furious against him."

"She is quite right. All these pretended magicians are infamous impostors."

"Not at all, Presto. For instance, the one who foretold the death of this impostor Partridge, Bickerstaff, has clearly told the truth."

"That was by accident, my dear; and you will see that not one of his other predictions will come to pass. And is Beck still occupied with politics?"

"No, all that is over. She only reads the 'Gazette,' in the hope of seeing your appointment to some bishopric."

Swift shook his head.

"Well," said Stella, "and have they given you nothing?"—"On the contrary, they have given me a horse which helped to carry me away from them."

"What good-for-nothing people! It was well worth while to leave us for this."

"You are right, child: it's a good lesson for the vagabond Presto. However, here he is back again, and quite reformed. Henceforth he will stop here, and take care of his poor little sick Stella."

"Oh, if you stay with us I shall soon get well! You don't know how dull it is here when you are away."

"Dear child! Well, now we'll have our revenge! We'll play, we'll laugh, we'll amuse ourselves. And the consultation: what do the doctors say?"

Dingley came just in time to answer that Stella had been ordered sea-bathing.

"And this is exactly the season for it," said Swift. "Do you know what I mean to do? I will settle you at some pretty spot at the sea-side."

"And where will you be?" asked Stella.

"Oh, I have all sorts of business, which will force me to be everywhere—sometimes at Laracor, and sometimes in Dublin. I shall ride to and fro upon Bolingbroke."

"Oh, let me see Bolingbroke!" said Stella.

She leant upon Swift and Dingley, and all three went to the stables.

"See how handsome he is," said Swift. "Isn't he quite as good as a bishopric?"—"Can I ride him, Presto?"

"Yes, my child, when you are a little stronger; only make haste and get well. I have brought you the most charming riding-habit?"—"A riding-habit!"

"Yes; a sort of man's dress. It is all the fashion in London, and something quite new. Come and see it."

They returned to the house; and Swift took out of his trunks various presents for Stella: the riding-habit, a microscope, a set of chessmen and a board, and some chocolate.

"As for Dinglibus, I have thought of nothing but her nose. This is for the outside," said he, displaying a pair of spectacles, "and this for the inside," putting into her hands a huge packet of Brazil snuff.

The two friends began to thank him, but he cut them short, to beg that the supper might be hurried. Decorum would not permit him to sleep under the same roof with two fair ladies; and after supper he would ask Doctor Warburton for a night's lodging.

"Poor Presto! only think of our turning him out of his own house," said Stella.

"Never mind! Presto will soon turn you out. To-night he has to talk over sundry matters with his Curate, to get an exact account of Dinglibus's conduct during his absence. But to-morrow—no, no, to-morrow Mr. Presto would like to be idle; but the day after to-morrow, on his way to Dublin, to visit his Archbishop, Presto will look about him on the coast, and do all he can to get rid of you."

Swift had recovered his talk. He cheered Stella, he teased Dinglibus. Patrick, who waited at table, was quite relieved; and as soon as his master was gone, he took advantage of his liberty to go and gossip with his cronies in the neighbourhood. He had been away a long time, and his friends were many. He did not come back until late on the following day. Swift was already at home, in his own room, alone and more moody than ever.

"A man can't return to his native land either," muttered Patrick, "without drinking a glass or two too many with his friends! Faith, master expects more than's reasonable."

This time there could be no mistake about it. Swift laughed and talked the whole time that he was with his female friends; but the moment he was alone with Patrick he never opened his mouth. Patrick, in order to have a quiet life with his master, condemned himself to the most rigorous abstinence.

This sobriety on his part was the more meritorious as he had fallen in with a host of acquaintances at Dublin, where Swift had hired a lodging, as well as at Dunleary, where Stella was staying for the sake of sea-bathing.

Dingley, who had a dread of the water, spent her time in picking up shells; but, spite of its novelty, this occupation did not absorb her to such a degree as to destroy in her all female curiosity. During the intervals of her conchological researches she attempted to draw Patrick out, and make him talk about his master's doings in London. Patrick was drunken, idle, careless, but he was not a gossip. When he did open his mouth, it was to drink. This was from no scruple on his part, but simply because he had nothing to say. He lived in a state of stupid contentment; he saw and heard nothing of what passed around him. To this extent drunkenness made him discreet. He knew nothing about the ministers, nothing about the Vanhomrighs, still less about the strange visits his master had received at Letcombe. The pot-house at Letcombe was not on the London road. But even if he had witnessed them, he would not have seen in them matter for gossip. Dingley lost her labour, and, far from learning anything from Patrick, it was she who told him with what promises the ministry had deceived his master.

Patrick, who had gained nothing by his sobriety, and who was cross-examining his conscience with great simplicity, in order to discover to what other crime he might attribute the obstinate silence which filled him with alarm, suddenly emerged from the cloud in which his thoughts had been wandering. He saw it all!

It was the ministry that was the criminal. He once

more breathed freely, and, releasing himself from a needless restriction, he again began to drink—to drink success to his dear master's desires. Ere long he had reason to hope that, by dint of wishes and libations, he had conquered adverse fortune, for, on returning one evening from Dunleary, they found a thick letter, sealed with the Treasury seal.

The letter was from the Lord Treasurer, who, in default of a bishopric, which he was at that moment unable to dispose of, for reasons he was not at liberty to state, offered his dear Jonathan either a canonry of Windsor or the deanery of St. Patrick's, Dublin. The Lord Treasurer left the choice to him in token of goodwill, but expressed a strong hope that he would give the preference to Windsor.

After so many hopes deceived, and after what Mrs. Vanhomrigh had told him at Letcombe of the Queen's dispositions towards him, it was a great thing to have the choice between two pieces of preferment, each worth at least a thousand a year. Swift suddenly recovered his speech, and, making his servant, for want of a better, the confidant of this good news, he asked him, in a jesting voice ; " Well, Mr. Patrick, and which would you choose if you were in my place ? "

" The deanery, to be sure, " said Patrick ; who, as an Irishman, thought no place in the world so fine as Dublin.

Swift shrugged his shoulders, and turned his back upon him.

" Indeed, " thought Patrick, biting his lip, " I might have known that I ought to have said Windsor ; for it is easy enough to see that he likes England a deal better than Ireland. "

Happily, it was merely a passing cloud ; and Swift soon recovered all his good-humour. Though alone, he ordered a better supper than ordinary, sent for a bottle of champagne, and poured out a glass of it for Patrick with his own hands.

Patrick went to bed, and had the most agreeable dreams *that night*.

His master's were no less pleasant. He was de-

terminated to decide in favour of Windsor; he should at last be able to leave this accursed Ireland ! Stella, thanks to sea-bathing, riding on horseback, and the amusements Swift had procured for her, was rapidly recovering her health ; her cheeks were less pale, her breathing much more free. She was gaining strength, spirits, and flesh. As her health returned, Swift's conscience expanded ; and in his own despite, a vague hope of regaining his liberty mingled with all his vows for the recovery of his sick favourite. He had not, however, acted upon this hope ; knowing, by experience, the danger of such indulgence, he had abstained from writing to Vanessa, and had only once heard of her at all through a letter from Mrs. Vanhomrigh, thanking him for the extraordinary services he had rendered them at Letcombe, and giving a satisfactory account of their journey. To this letter he had had resolution enough to reply merely by good wishes and former offers of service. But now that Heaven seemed inclined to reward him for his firmness, was he bound to exercise such extreme rigour against himself ? Would it not be ridiculous in him to fancy himself indispensable to the happiness of a handsome girl of eighteen ? and to sacrifice a profound and unquestionable attachment to an imaginary love, of which no proof had ever existed beyond an illness, which had been cured by bathing in the sea.

Mrs. Vanhomrigh's ambitious projects might lead her to affect to believe that her daughter would soon be cured ; but Swift knew Vanessa better. Her tranquillity was not forgetfulness ; it was the pride which scorns complaint. Mrs. Vanhomrigh had no power save in his support. And now that he no longer had the same reasons for making common cause with her, he might withdraw this support, and she would be obliged to lower her pretensions, and would, no doubt, prefer to have as a son-in-law a Canon of Windsor, likely to become a Bishop, than to doom her daughter to sorrow and a single life. Nobody would be disappointed, but that foolish schemer, Dingley, and without causing the least grief to his dear little Stella, he might devote his life to his beloved *Vanessa*, and prove to her that the coldness and harshness

with which she reproached him were but a painful duty he had been forced to impose upon himself.

What a delightful thought to bring together the two objects of his affection without fear of jealousy! to be able to love them both at once with such different feelings; to be a lover and a husband, without ceasing to be a father. What happiness to press to his heart these two beloved creatures, to teach them to value one another, to give to Stella a young mother, who should protect her in the world, where he would see her in her turn inspire and feel a genuine attachment,—and to enable her to enjoy in her turn the felicity of which she would not have deprived her friends!

The Lord Treasurer's letter had come under cover to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, who had sent it on to Swift by express. But the same packet brought him another letter, which reached him the next morning by the post.

This letter was from Mrs. Vanhomrigh.

She wrote in great agitation to tell him that Lord Rivers (the match she had talked about without mentioning his name) had at last hinted to her his intention of asking Esther's hand in marriage. It was needless to say that so brilliant a match satisfied her fondest wishes, and that she trusted her daughter would not be foolish enough to refuse it. But in order to make matters more sure she had determined before communicating this offer to Esther to beg the kind, worthy Doctor, to do her a fresh service, an act of true friendship: namely, to perfect what he had so honourably begun, and to use his influence with Esther, to determine her to accept Lord Rivers.

This request could not have been more ill-timed. Swift tore up the letter.

But nothing so inclines a man to hear reason as having first given way to anger. Ashamed of his violence he calmly picked up the pieces of the letter, and reflected that before coming to a determination he must sound Stella's feelings. He accordingly went to Dunleary, and told them the grand news in a jesting tone, which might allow him to draw back in case he should commit any *imprudence*.

"I have already asked Patrick's advice; now ladies, let me hear yours."

Dingley opened her mouth to speak, but Swift stopped her, saying: "The youngest must speak first. Stella, which do you advise me, St. Patrick's or Windsor?"

Instead of answering, Stella looked Swift steadily in the face.

"Well?"—"Which do you like best, Presto? As for me, I think that Windsor..."

"Oh! no doubt," cried Dingley.

"Don't you think so?" said Swift. "At Windsor Presto will be near the ministers, and may intrigue as much as he will. He will be rather far from Stella to be sure; but he will leave her lady and mistress of Laracor, and he will come and see her."

While he was speaking, Stella fixed upon him an anxious gaze; and before he had done, she threw herself weeping into his arms, and cried: "Oh, don't say that! don't say that! You won't leave me again, will you? You will take me with you wherever you go."

"Yes, my dear! Yes, child," cried Swift, forgetting everything else at the sight of her sudden despair.

"Presto was joking!" added Dingley, greatly relieved from her own anxiety.

"I know very well that he was joking," said Esther, sobbing and smiling through her tears; "but I can't help it: it grieves me all the same."

By dint of caresses and protestations, Swift succeeded in making her forget this alarm, and the day passed in talking about the two pieces of preferment, and calculating the relative advantages of each. With the thoughtlessness of a child, Esther had passed from the extreme of uneasiness to the extreme of security; making plans, settling the expenses, disposing of Swift, of his preferment and of his purse, with such simplicity, that something more than courage would have been needed to undeceive her.

Patrick was not much pleased to find that every voice was in favour of Windsor. However, the grand thing was that his master had recovered his good humour. He

was very disagreeably surprised to find him more' dispirited than ever as soon as they were alone.

"What, in the devil's name, can ail him?"

This question troubled him all night and he could not sleep a wink. But what was his amazement next day when he learnt that Swift, after walking up and down his room the whole night, had written to the Lord Treasurer to say that he chose Dublin.

This was extremely flattering to Patrick. It was clear that his opinion had prevailed. Moreover it was agreeable to him; he would not be obliged to leave his beloved country. But the best of the matter was, that his master's silence no doubt arose from the difficulty of making his choice; and that now the hand of the weather-glass would turn. It did turn while they were at Dunleary; but, as soon as they came back it again pointed to *Stormy*.

This time Patrick was completely put out. He had deluged his stomach with water in order to please his master, he had given him excellent advice, which Swift, spite of his contemptuous manner, had ended by following: and yet he got no thanks. It would be far better to tell him at once that his services were no longer needed; or rather he would do well to avoid this ill compliment: it was much better to give warning than to receive it. He accordingly did give warning.

But he received no answer. This silence being precisely the grievance which induced him to leave, made him persevere; he repeated his words.

"How now!" said Swift; "you give warning!"—"Yes, Sir."

"I suppose you've found a better place."—"No, Sir."

"And what are you going to do?"—"I don't know, Sir."

"You don't know. Then why leave me?"—"Because I see plainly that you are no longer satisfied with my services."

"Of course not! Do you think it likely that you will ever find a master that can be satisfied with such a brute as you—an idle, rascally drunkard?"

Under this torrent of abuse, Patrick's face brightened,

like a rose after a shower. He now repented of the step he had taken.

"However," continued Swift, "that is your affair. Good luck to you; go to the devil! Let's see: how much do I owe you?"—"Oh, Sir!"

"What do you mean by 'Oh, Sir?'—I ask you how much I owe you?"

"Oh, Sir," cried Patrick, throwing himself on his knees before his master: "pray, Sir, don't turn me out of the house."

"What! do you beg me not to turn you out of the house, you rascal?"—"Pray don't, Sir!"

"And pray was it not you who just now gave me warning?"—"It was, Sir! but..."

"You give me warning, you insolent rascal, a scoundrel whom I only kept out of charity."—"Yes, Sir."

"A stupid hound, who does not know how to use his ten fingers."—"Yes, Sir."

"A sot, who spends his whole time at the pothouse."—"Yes, Sir."

"A scoundrel, who ought to think himself too happy not to be kicked out of doors."—"Yes, Sir."

"Who the deuce would keep such a wretch as you?" continued Swift, pulling his ear soundly.—"No one, Sir, no one."

"You'll starve, I tell you."—"Yes, Sir."

"And yet you come to me with your silly warning."

"Oh, Sir, indeed I'll never do it again. I did quite wrong, it was all a mistake. Indeed, Sir, I hope you will forgive me."

"Impudent rascal! you deserve that I should take you at your word."—"Oh, pray, Sir! don't Sir! for pity's sake."

"There, that will do; be off," said Swift, pushing him over. "Go to bed, you drunken rogue."

"Drunken rogue, Sir! It's above a month since I have tasted a drop of anything stronger than water."—"Go to bed, I tell you, and don't let me see your face again to-day."

Patrick was wrongfully accused, but the punishment was not severe. He crawled out of the room and went to bed, rejoicing in having got off so easily.

Swift had not shown himself a model of patience, but it was impossible for him just then to be cool. Ever since he had received the Lord Treasurer's letter, he had been in a state of horrible perplexity. Giving him the choice between Windsor and Dublin, annulled the past, and forced him to recommence his former struggles—to choose once more between Stella and Vanessa. After a long and painful hesitation, he had ended the struggle by giving up Vanessa, no doubt because in so doing he sacrificed himself. For if, under ordinary circumstances, the voice of love spoke louder in his heart than that of duty, duty and disinterestedness in their turn gained the upper hand on important occasions. But all the self-command he possessed had been exhausted by this act of heroism; there was none left for petty details.

How could he be cool? When he had just sent an answer to the Lord Treasurer, in which he made choice of Ireland, where he hated to live, by which he had condemned himself to exile and neglect; for it is with those in office above all that the absent are always wrong. Windsor might have led to anything. At St. Patrick's he was decidedly shelved.

How could he be cool? He had just written to Vanessa a letter, unsealed and under cover to Mrs. Vanhomrigh, advising her to marry Lord Rivers; he had even had the courage to tell her that he had been offered the choice between St. Patrick's and Windsor, and that he had chosen St. Patrick's.

How could he be cool? When constrained by conscience, harder even than necessity, he had condemned himself at once to suffer himself and to inflict suffering upon another; to be at once a victim and an executioner.

Alas! he was left with no other consolation than the feeling of having fulfilled his duty, which is much like the relief felt by a wounded man after plucking the iron from his wound. He waited with a feverish impatience for Vanessa's marriage to give him the finishing stroke, and extinguish the last ray of hope in his heart. But this sad wish was not fulfilled. She answered his letter, *but only in order to declare that she would not marry Lord Rivers.* "He was not," she said, "to seek any

motive for her refusal than this : she chose to be able to esteem her husband. She ended by thanking Swift for his advice, and regretting that she had profited by it so little. But she hoped he would not be discouraged, and that he would continue towards her his kindness, of which she would endeavour to become more worthy."

This was the only passage that gave any token of love : it might be the last struggle of expiring hope. In order rather to err on the side of prudence, Swift interpreted it so ; and as it was equally important not to encourage the illusions of her distempered soul, and not to envenom her wound, he counterbalanced whatever he might involuntarily have written in too affectionate a tone, by addressing this letter, like the former, to her mother.

This precaution of making Mrs. Vanhomrigh a party to the correspondence was more chilling than any style in which Swift could possibly have written, and he was more grieved than surprised at receiving no answer from Vanessa. After a long interval of silence, Mrs. Vanhomrigh wrote, to say that if she had not been very seriously ill, she should have thanked the dear Doctor long ago for his letter concerning Lord Rivers. She added, that her daughter's refusal had cruelly disappointed her ; but that, amid all her regrets, it was some consolation to her to see that, at any rate, Esther had recovered her taste for society ; that she went to balls and plays ; in short, that she followed the good advice of their excellent friend.

This dissipation might arise merely from pique, and Vanessa might possibly suspect Swift of the same, if he did not answer her mother's letter. He accordingly congratulated Mrs. Vanhomrigh warmly upon the satisfaction she received from her daughter, and exhorted the latter to go on as she had begun.

This time, weeks, and then months, passed away without an answer.

"Come," said he to himself, "this is a good sign : she's cured. If she were not, her mother would be civil to me ; and she herself, with all her pride, would have found means indirectly to keep up some communication with me. Yes, she's cured. At twenty, life flies so fast : *halls, dress, admiration, and lovers, are a sure and pleas-*

sant remedy. Those inflammable hearts are extinguished as easily as they are lighted : they blaze up like straw. What would have become of me if I had given way ? Ah ! poor Stella ! poor Stella ! thou art not so passionate nor so brilliant, but thy affection is more lasting. Heaven already rewards me for my sacrifice ; and I see that I shall find my own happiness in making thine."

While his heart was feeding on this bitter hope, he little thought that the next day he should be on his way to London in search of Vanessa.

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. VANHOMRIGH had died deeply in debt, and the creditors had seized Marley Abbey.

Marley Abbey ! Vanessa's place ! How was it that the creditors of the mother had seized the daughter's property ? Esther must have had the folly to give it as collateral security. And yet she had two guardians named by her father, one of whom was a man learned in the law. It was scarcely credible, yet the fact was vouched by a witness above suspicion—by the person in charge of the Abbey, an old gardener, who, finding that he received no news of his mistress, had come for information to Swift, whom he knew to be the friend of the family.

Before an hour had elapsed, Swift was on the road to London, riding post as fast as he could. He had just received his nomination to the Deanery of Saint Patrick's, and the Archbishop of Dublin was expecting him. But what cared he for the Deanery or the Archbishop ? He had no time for leave-takings or letters of apology. Poor Vanessa ! What a calamity ! How much she must need consolation ! How he reproached himself for having left her, for having treated her so harshly ! Alas, for human prudence !

After five long days of anxiety and of vain conjectures—*after having done all that money, persuasion, and*

threats could do to hasten his journey, Swift reached London and went straight to the Vanhomrighs' house.

All the shutters were closed: a mortal chill struck him to the heart. He leapt from the coach, and knocked at the door. After he had waited some time, the door was opened by a stranger, a sort of bailiff put in possession of the premises until the effects should be sold under the authority of the law.

"And Mrs. Vanhomrigh's children, where are they?" he asked.

"They have fled from justice, and wisely too; otherwise they would have been provided with apartments gratis, which are somewhat more difficult to quit than they are to enter."

Vanessa threatened with arrest! Swift had a thousand questions to ask; but his interlocutor could give him no further information and he hastened to gain intelligence in some other quarter. He drove to Mr. Barrett, the one of Vanessa's guardians who was learned in the law.

On getting out of his carriage, Swift thought he saw Mr. Barrett at the window. Nevertheless, he was said not to be at home. Swift insisted upon seeing him, and the servant appeared to hesitate. But there came a second servant, who distinctly asserted that his master was out, and Swift was forced to go away as wise as he came. Surprised and annoyed at the reception he had found, he drove to Mr. Philipps, the other guardian.

This gentleman was an old friend of the family, and Esther's godfather. When Swift was announced, he received him with open arms; and it was not without visible signs of emotion, that Mr. Philipps confirmed and explained the sad intelligence that had brought Swift to him.

Mrs. Vanhomrigh's death had revealed the disordered state of her affairs. From maternal vanity she had kept house in a style far beyond her means, trusting that Esther would retrieve them by a splendid marriage. Thus Esther's refusal of Lord Rivers disconcerted her plans, and it seemed probable that this disappointment had hastened her end. On learning the state of affairs, the Captain, while his sisters were weeping by the bedside of

their mother, packed up all the jewels, plate, and other valuables that he could easily carry, and fled to France with his booty.

On learning this, the creditors were furious in their denunciations against the family: one would have supposed, from what they said, that Esther was her brother's accomplice. Proud as she was, Esther had not the firmness to treat these odious suspicions with deserved contempt; and in order to put an end to them, to vindicate the honour of her name which had been compromised by the extravagance of her mother and the base conduct of her brother, she had made herself answerable for all outstanding claims.

"And you allowed her to commit such an act of folly!" cried Swift.

"How was I to prevent it? Barrett indeed did all he could, but in the midst of the business, she came of age, and her first act was to sign the fatal deed."

"Oh! if I had but been there! Of age or not, I will answer for it, she should not have signed the deed."

"Ah, my dear Sir, she was very self-willed, I can assure you; and as Barrett said, how can you argue against scruples of conscience? and then, as he also observed, God knows to what deplorable extremes the creditors might have gone! Only think! a fraudulent concealment of valuable property!"

"Very well, Sir! the culprit would have been prosecuted, and she would have proved her innocence and saved her fortune—much good it has done her! Her brother is not a whit the less a rogue, and she is ruined and forced to hide for fear of arrest."

"Poor child!" said the old man, with tears in his eyes; "let us hope that the creditors will not find her."

"What reason have you to hope so? Do you know where she is?"—"Alas, no!"

"What search has been made after her?"

"Barrett has given himself a world of trouble," said the old man, who much preferred shedding a few tears where he was, to quitting his arm-chair in order to spare himself the need for them.

"And then, how is one to find a person in a town like

London? Fortunately the creditors are not conjurors any more than ourselves."

Swift was tempted to reply that they certainly would take more trouble about the matter, but the good man was too old to be educated afresh. It was not good-will but energy that was wanting; and he was so much affected by the misfortunes of his ward, that reproaches would have been as unjust as they were useless. Swift contented himself with drawing from him such information as might enable him to act for himself.

"And her younger sister?" asked Swift.—"Mary? Esther has taken her with her."

"And what means of subsistence have they?"

"Alas! that is just what makes me most anxious. She took nothing with her, probably to prevent the creditors from coupling her name with her brother's. I should so much have liked to send her some money. I have always been expecting her to write to me; but no letter has come."

He began to weep. In order to console him, Swift argued that her silence was a proof that she had some resources; and then thinking of the future, he added: "Mary, at any rate, is not ruined."—"She has nothing!"

"How! nothing? What has become of her share of her father's property?"

"She was born six or seven months after the death of Mr. Vanhomrigh, and no provision had been made for her. Godfrey's share was spent in a trice. Esther could not alienate any of her own portion until she was of age; moreover, Mrs. Vanhomrigh had taken it upon herself to provide for Mary."

Here again was ample matter for reproach; but Swift preferred asking for a list of the creditors, and while running his eye over it, he said: "Have you seen them?"—"Barrett undertook to speak with them, but..."

"They refused to come to terms?"

"What terms can be offered them? Poor Esther's whole fortune will not pay one-half of their demands."

"That is not her fault; it is quite enough to take all her fortune without depriving her of personal liberty."

This idea had never struck Mr. Philipps: he now proposed to accompany Swift, in his visits to the different

creditors. It sometimes happens, that a horse which is worth nothing alone, goes well enough in double harness: and the presence of one of Vanessa's guardians gave greater propriety to such a step. Swift accordingly accepted the proposal. But it was now eleven o'clock at night, they, therefore, put off their expedition till the morning.

Next morning, Swift was on his way to the place of meeting, when, passing through Duke Street, St. James's, he was greeted by a fishmonger who was standing on his door-step. When last in London, Swift had been in the habit of going now and then into the shop of this man, who was his neighbour, to look at the fish on the counter. And thanks to the intimate knowledge he displayed on the subject of salmon, crimped cod and the like, he was treated with a respect which was in no degree owing to his expenditure in the shop, seeing that when he did dine at home, an event which seldom happened, and which he much disliked, he never bought anything but a few herrings.

The fishmonger's bow reminded Swift that he was one of the creditors of Mrs. Vanhomrigh's estate, and the Dean stopped to sound the man as to what per centage he was inclined to take. Far from showing any ill-will, the fishmonger seemed to think that nothing would be easier than to come to some arrangement with the creditors, and asked, with great interest, after the poor young lady. "Why was she hiding? Who could have the heart to arrest her? As for him, if he had wished to learn her address..."

"Her address?"—"Yes, a man came and offered to sell me the secret."

"Who is this man, and where can I find him?"

"Upon my word, I didn't even choose to listen to him. I think he said that he lived in Trinity Lane, in the City."

"And the number?"—"Deuce take it! you ask more than I can tell. As far as I can remember, it was some odd number: I should say 17."

"And do you remember his name?"—"His name? *stop a bit! it was a short name, something like—something like Snape—Benjamin Snape—that's it.*"

"Benjamin Snape—very well, I am much obliged to you: I shall go at once, for fear he should sell his secret to some of the creditors."

"I rather doubt it; the fellow asked too much: and it is not every one that will lighten his purse in order to burthen his conscience."

Swift had now something better to do than to go to Mr. Philipps. He jumped into a hackney-coach: "Number 17, Trinity Lane!"

That was the right direction; but the man he wanted was not at home. Swift asked whether he was expected soon: and, on receiving an answer in the affirmative, he determined to await his return. But the possessor of the secret was in search of the very fortune which was waiting for him at his lodgings, and did not return till dusk. Fortunately the secret was not yet sold, and Swift, who was in no humour to drive a hard bargain, soon agreed to the man's terms.

Esther also lodged in the City, somewhere beyond the Tower, at Number 5, Crown Court, in a room on the left-hand side, on the second floor.

Night had closed in, when Swift, trembling with hope, after wandering about in a labyrinth of dirty, narrow streets, where he had to stop and ask his way every moment, reached one of those alleys so numerous in the City, into which the sun never penetrates even in the summer; and at either end of which two posts prevented the passage of horses. Number 5 was one of those miserable-looking houses, inhabited only by the poorest class of lodgers, as the muddy threshold and ever-open door sufficiently testified.

Swift heaved a deep sigh, and running quickly up the stairs, he knocked at the door which the man had described. He thought he heard some one move in the room, but the noise was succeeded by profound silence. He knocked a second time, and mentioned his name; still no answer. He began to fear that he had been misdirected, or that he had arrived too late, when the idea struck him of calling "Vanessa." This word acted like a spell. The door opened. It was she indeed! but in *what a condition*.

Esther lay fainting on the floor. The sudden transition from acute fear to still more acute joy, had only left her strength enough to beckon to her sister to open the door; after which she fainted. In want of the most ordinary restoratives, and more hindered than assisted by Mary, Swift was a long time before he could bring back Esther to life. At length she opened her eyes, and a torrent of tears relieved her oppression.

"How did you discover our retreat?" asked she, as soon as she could speak.

"And how was it that you did not tell it me yourself? Why did you not write to me the moment your misfortunes befel you?"

At this reproach, which Swift could not restrain, Vanessa's whole frame trembled with emotion, and her quivering lips were unable to utter a word.

"Do not attempt to speak," said Swift; "you have need of all your strength. I have come to fetch you, and we must leave London this very night!"

"Great God! and whither can we go?"—"To France or Holland—never mind which!"

"Oh! not to France; they will say that I went to join..."

"You are right," said Swift, interrupting her, in order to spare her the shame of mentioning her brother's name. "Well, we will go to Holland. I will fetch a post-chaise, and we will drive to Harwich, where we may find a vessel ready to sail."

"Will you come with us?"—"How can you doubt it?"

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" said she, holding out her hand, which Swift eagerly grasped. Time was precious.

"I leave you," said he, "in order to be back the sooner. Above all, take care not to open the door to any living soul during my absence. No one, you know, has the right to break it open."

"We will only open to *Vanessa*," said she, with a melting look.

While giving this prudent piece of advice, Swift himself opened the door. A man, who had concealed himself in the passage, took the opportunity of slipping into

the room. It was a bailiff, who immediately arrested Esther.

Swift was overwhelmed by this unexpected blow. Esther tried hard to put a good face on the matter, and stammered a few broken sentences, with a frantic smile—a smile far sadder than tears. Her little sister clung affrighted round her waist, and hid her face in the folds of her gown. Swift felt that he must bear the brunt of the affair, and controlling his feelings with a strong effort, he asked, in a husky voice, at whose suit she was arrested.

“At the suit of Lucas Broderick.”

“Lucas Broderick! What, the fishmonger in Duke Street?”—“St. James’s,” added the bailiff.

It was indeed the tender-hearted fishmonger, who, having no mind to purchase a secret at too high a price, had devised means to learn it for nothing, by inducing Swift to buy it, and then to follow him.

“The infamous—the abominable hypocrite!”

During this torrent of abuse, the bailiff made no attempt to justify his client; he knew nothing beyond his warrant. At his call, one of his followers, posted in the passage, entered the room; and Mary, seeing that they were about to remove her sister, uttered piercing shrieks. The scene was heart-rending. What was to be done?

What was to be done! why discharge the debt, if, as Swift believed, it was not beyond his means. He was angry with himself for not having thought of this before: it would have spared Vanessa many a pang. It did not amount to above eighty guineas, and he had as much in his travelling belt. He dismissed these unpleasant visitors with delight.

This alarm was a fresh incitement to haste. Swift set off without delay, taking, however, greater precautions this time. But he was now penniless, and, while the post-chaise was being got ready, he went to Mr. Philipps, to borrow some money. Most unluckily it was Saturday, and Mr. Philipps, although he had retired from business, still retained his old habits, and had gone into the country. His house was not above four miles from London; but this would lose too much time.

Swift thought of Lord Rivers. He was rich, and he

had wished to marry Esther; Lord Rivers was the obvious person to apply to. Swift therefore hurried to his house. Lord Rivers was not in the country, but he was gone to bed, and no one dared to disturb his Lordship. Swift, to the great scandal of the footmen, did dare it, and found the young Lord, not in bed, but in his dressing-gown.

Swift was not one of those timid people who, when they have to speak to somebody on urgent business, begin by asking after the health of the whole family. He went straight to the point; but no sooner had he pronounced the name of Esther...

"Oh, I know! I know all about it!" said the young Lord, in a languishing voice! "For God's sake! don't mention the subject, it's too sad."

"Too sad, my Lord? but it's just because it is so sad, that we must speak about it."

"No doubt—no doubt; and I should like nothing better if I were as strong as you; but, in my delicate health, the least emotion might be fatal to me."

"And the least delay may be fatal to her, in the state in which she now is."

"Why what is the matter?"—"What is the matter? My Lord, she may be arrested at any moment!"

"O, how dreadful!"—"But for me, she would have been arrested just now."

"Once more, Sir, I beseech you. What is the use of all these harrowing details? What would you have me do in the matter?"

"What would I have you do, my Lord? She must leave England; she is penniless, and I have exhausted the little money I had, and I could only think of you."

"Eh, Sir! why did not you say so at first. Call upon my man of business—to-morrow."

"I have nothing to do with your man of business, my Lord, but with yourself: I don't want the money to-morrow, but to-night—this very instant! The object is—do you understand me? to keep her from sleeping in prison to-night."

"In prison! how horrid. I shall have the nightmare *all night!*"—"Well, my Lord, have the nightmare, and *let us save her.*"

"The nightmare! Good Heavens! with my nerves! Pray, Sir, do you take me for a porter?"

"My Lord, I took you for a friend of Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh."

"A friend! certainly I am her friend, but not her only one. Why do you torment me so? I am out of health, apply to some one else. Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh must have some friends who are well."

"Well, my Lord! if you think yourself so ill, try to gain heaven by some meritorious action."

"Heaven! did ever any one talk so to a man in my condition! Heaven, indeed! I hope I am not quite so bad as that! and, with your permission, Sir, I shall first try to get well."

"What is the use of dragging out a life of pills and poultices. Live but a couple of days, but pass them like a man and a Christian. Show that you have a heart—without that, a man is at best a corpse."

"A corpse! I a corpse! Why you want to murder me! Sir, if you want my purse, take it! take everything in the house! But, for God's sake, be more measured in your language! Come, now, let us see: how much do you want?"

"Nothing, my Lord. I came to request you to do Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh a service, and you offer me alms. I would rather see her rot in prison than be released by you. Keep your money for your apothecary!"

After these words, Swift left the room, slamming the door violently after him. He had eased his own heart of its wrath; but this indulgence might cost Vanessa dear, and he felt sadly at a loss when he found himself in the street. Should he make a fresh effort elsewhere? He was not at all tempted to do so after this first experience. He decided upon getting into the post-chaise at once and driving to Mr. Philipps' villa. It was a long way to go; but, at any rate, he was sure not to meet with a refusal.

He was right, Mr. Philipps readily placed his purse at Swift's service. He was overjoyed to hear that Esther was found, and to be able to contribute to the safety of his dear ward. He wanted to go with Swift to see and *press the dear child to his bosom, and to protect her*

during her flight. But feeling that he should only be an incumbrance, he let the Doctor return without him to London, where the two sisters were awaiting him in the utmost anxiety.

There was no time for explanations. Swift conducted them to the post-chaise which he had left in an adjoining street. They all three got in, and the post-boy was ordered to drive on. Suddenly one man stopped the horses while another stood by the door, and Esther was again arrested. It was the same bailiff who had already come in the name of the fishmonger, and who had taken advantage of the time Swift had been forced to lose, to get a second warrant made out at the suit of another creditor.

The two sisters said not a word, but they cowered close to Swift, and the nervous pressure of their hands on his arm, expressed the torture they endured better than any lamentations could have done. His heart was ready to burst. These two weak girls clung to him in the wreck of their hopes, and he was without hope himself. For this time his whole worldly means would not have covered the debt, which was one of the heaviest.

One resource still remained: to offer his personal security. He besought the bailiff to suspend the execution of the warrant until he, Swift, had seen the creditor in whose name the arrest was effected.

"I would do it with pleasure, Sir," said the bailiff, "if it was in the day-time; but at this time of night, nothing is to be done. People waked out of their best sleep are seldom accommodating."—"That's my look out."

"I don't say it is not, Sir; but what are we to do all the time?"—"The lady will return to her lodging, and you will wait there till I return."

"Why, we shall have to be up all night! Take my advice, Sir; put off your visit till to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Swift. "Don't you understand that I want to spare the lady the horror of passing a night in a spunging-house?"

"In a spunging-house!" said the bailiff, angrily; "the gentlewoman will be very comfortable in my house."

"Yes! yes!" said Esther, wishing to put an end to the conversation.

She was just getting out of the post-chaise, when Swift forced her back into her seat; and said to the bailiff, in an imperious tone: "Will you consent to the delay I asked of you, or no?"

"Impossible, Sir. The gentlewoman sees it herself. I will treat her with the greatest civility. She may, if she pleases, keep the young lady with her; and to-morrow, when you have settled matters with her creditor and with the Sheriff, I shall be too happy to let her go. Come, Sir, one night is soon over—particularly one that is half-gone already. Let us see," said he, looking at his watch by the carriage-lamp, "it is nearly one now."

"One o'clock," cried Swift, interrupting Esther, who again talked of accompanying the bailiff, "one o'clock!—one o'clock! And what day of the week do you call it?"—"What day?" said the bailiff, trying to guess what Swift was at.

"Yea, what is to-day?"—"Why, Saturday, to be sure?"

"And suppose it should turn out to be Sunday?" said Swift, putting his watch under the man's nose. "Aha! you arrest people on Sunday, do you? very pretty, truly! You had better take yourself off this very moment, or I will teach you your own business."

The bailiff tried to argue the point, but he was clearly in the wrong, and moreover had to deal with a man who perfectly knew what he was about. He was accordingly forced to let his prey escape. The fugitives now had no further cause for fear. They had four-and-twenty hours before them to get to Harwich, and to leave England; this was more than enough. And two days after this, Swift had settled Esther and her sister in Holland. Encouraged by this first success, he returned to London to see whether he could not come to terms with the creditors.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON his arrival in London, Swift instantly went to inform Mr. Philipps of the successful result of his expedition. During the whole narration, the kind-hearted old man poured forth tears, thanks, and praises. But when

it came to the question of seeing the creditors, it was clear that the reason why the excellent old gentleman so much admired activity in others, was because he had so very small a share of that quality himself.

The idea that there was nothing more to be done, had something to do with the pleasure he had felt. For some days past he had followed his own instincts; and his zeal, like a watch, wanted winding up every day. It was not that he positively refused, but he raised endless objections.

"What is the use of going to the creditors, now that she is safe out of England?"

"Why to gain their consent to her return; so that, after depriving her of her whole fortune, they may not also inflict upon her the punishment of exile."

This was unanswerable. But the hours of business were past: like the bailiff, he urged that it was too late. They would either not find the people they wanted, or they would disturb them. Besides, he had a colleague in the trust, and could not act without consulting him."

His presence was by no means indispensable: Swift agreed to everything he said, and, after making out a list of the creditors, he started alone, and spent the evening in seeing them. He expected to have to exert all his eloquence; but, to his amazement, he found them all very well disposed, even the one in whose name Esther had so narrowly escaped arrest.

Finding all the creditors in the same humour, Swift continued his rounds more for the satisfaction of his own conscience, than from any conviction of the utility of his proceedings. At length he went to a tradesman, who did not understand the object of his inquiry.

"The arrest of Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh? But it was the mother who owed me money."

"So it was, but since the daughter has given up all she possessed to pay her mother's debts..."

"Oh, Sir, you do not say so!"

"Did not you know it?"—"No; I have but just returned home."

"*And when did you go?*"—"Let me see—it will be *eleven weeks ago come to-morrow.*"

"That accounts for it. It is not above ten weeks since Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh made herself responsible."

"She had something of her own, then?"—"About seven thousand pounds."

"Seven thousand pounds! Good Heavens! How I've been bubbled!"—"How bubbled?"

"Yes, bubbled; faith! I've sold my debt."—"Sold it?"

"To a rascal who must have got wind of Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh's intentions, and who gave me twenty per cent. for what is worth double. Seven thousand pounds sterling! Here's money easily got, with a vengeance! and I, who never dreamed of anything of the sort. We were all glad enough to find a man who would buy up the debt at any price; I did no more than the rest."

"And did the other creditors sell too?"—"Others, Sir? to be sure they did, one and all."

"What, all?"—"Excepting, perhaps, one or two, whose claims were very trifling."

"How can this be? I have but just been seeing them all, and not one said a word about it."

"Because they promised to keep it secret. But faith! since I have let the cat out of the bag, I won't eat my words! He had better come and complain—the rascal! Seven thousand pounds sterling!"

"You are convinced, then, that he knew of Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh's intention beforehand?"

"If he had not, is it likely that he would have given twenty per cent.—ready money, too? The mother's property would hardly pay a larger dividend than that!"

"But what can the man be who has got such correct information?"

"Ah! I now nothing about that. One has no inquiries to make about people who pay ready money. All I know is that his name is Thomas Craggs, and that he lives in the Borough at No. 7, Maiden Lane. Seven thousand pounds sterling! My God! yes. The debts amounted to twenty-three thousand pounds. The mother had five thousand, the daughter seven—in all, twelve thousand pounds. We should have got nearly fifty per cent. of our money! What a fool I have been! What an ass I have been!"

Swift had collected information which, if it did not enable him to get to the bottom of the intrigue, would at any rate make it much easier to free Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh from the danger of future arrest. He did not stop to check the calculations which the creditor was making on his fingers, but, crossing the Thames, he went straight to the man who had bought up all the debts. He lived in a house almost as wretched as the one in which Vanessa had taken refuge.

He must be some usurer, thought Swift, as he mounted the filthiest of staircases.

Usurer or no, the man was not at home, and Swift went back to Mr. Philipps, who was expecting him with impatience. The news which Swift brought astonished him exceedingly: but when he heard the name of the buyer of his ward's debts.

"Craggs," said he.—"Yes, Craggs. Do you know any one of that name?"—"Certainly."

"And his Christian name?" asked Swift, sharply.—"Thomas."

"Thomas! that's it."—"Indeed! what a strange coincidence! But it can't be the same man."

"Why not?"—"My man is a poor devil, who, I'm sure, owes many more debts than are owing to him."

"Is it his lodging that makes you say so?"

"And where does he lodge?"—"No. 7, Maiden Lane."

"In the Borough? God forgive me, I think that is the very place!"—"Indeed! Do try to recollect exactly."

"Stay a minute! I must have got his address somewhere," said Mr. Philipps, searching among his papers. "Exactly. Here it is—'Thomas Craggs, 7, Maiden Lane, Borough.' How very strange. It is not above four months ago that he was pestering me to get him made an exciseman. Upon my word I don't feel much remorse at having forgotten him. I see he has made his fortune."

"If he had made his fortune, he would have changed his lodging, and he lives in a garret. On the contrary, I believe him to be one of those double-faced usurers who are sometimes rich, and sometimes poor, as it may happen to suit their convenience and interest. Tell me, now, was he acquainted with Esther?"—"Not he!"

"Are you quite sure of that?"—"Positive!"

"How could he have known her wild scheme before anybody else? For he must have speculated on that. She must have told it to all the world?"

"She told no one, I assure you, except Barrett and myself. From the very first, Barrett exacted from her the most absolute silence on this point. It was too important that the creditors should not get wind of Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh's determination, in the event of her changing her mind. Moreover, if anything had been known, the creditors would never have sold their claims."

"True. Nevertheless, Craggs must have learnt the fact from some one."

"I can't see my way at all. He only knows Barrett and myself, and it clearly can be neither of us."

"He knows Mr. Barrett, does he?"—"Did not I tell you that it was Mr. Barrett who recommended him to me?"

"No—oh! so he knows Mr. Barrett..."

Swift stopped short in the midst of his sentence. A new light suddenly broke upon him. This Craggs, unknown to Esther, and yet acquainted with her inmost thoughts; this Craggs was favoured by Barrett—Barrett, a rich and acute lawyer—Barrett, who was Vanessa's guardian, and yet with so many means of influencing his ward, unable to prevent her from ruining herself! All this looked very suspicious! What if, instead of a needy usurer, Craggs should turn out to be a man of straw, put forward for the nonce. Barrett would not be the first guardian who had cheated his ward; and nothing was easier than to work upon Vanessa's generosity, and to deceive such a guardian as Mr. Philipps.

But the worthy old gentleman was completely in the hands of his colleague. Swift, therefore, took good care not to breathe his suspicions. He asked what was the nature of the employment which Craggs wished to obtain; and then leading the conversation back to Esther's exile, he expressed great satisfaction that there was now only one creditor whose consent still had to be obtained.

"And he is one who will not venture to oppose us," said Mr. Philipps eagerly. "Shall I see him?"

"It is not worth while," replied Swift, still more eagerly; "if you will but allow me to use your name, in order to bring him to his senses."

There was never any difficulty in persuading Mr. Philipps to inaction; and on being authorised to act in his name, Swift sent to Craggs, desiring him to call upon him at his own house as soon as he could, on business of Mr. Philipps's.

On hearing this, Craggs told Swift's messenger that he would follow him at once; and, accordingly, he arrived almost as soon as his answer. This looked like the punctuality of a waiter upon Providence, and bespoke poverty fully as much as his garret. Swift determined to treat him cavalierly.

"Oh! there you are, my good fellow : I am very glad to see you. Mr. Philipps has been speaking to me about you."

Craggs did not seem at all offended by this tone of protection. Swift went on.

"He tells me that you wish to be made an exciseman." Craggs bowed affirmatively.

"Very well! I hope we may get it for you, but you must draw up a memorial. Sit down there and write it."

Craggs did not want much pressing, but sat down pen in hand, and made no difficulty of urging his poverty on the consideration of the Commissioners. When the memorial was signed and placed in Swift's hands, the latter, glancing over it, exclaimed:

"Thomas Craggs, 7, Maiden Lane! How now?—are you the same person who bought up Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh's debts?"

At this unexpected apostrophe, Craggs was petrified with astonishment. His silence was as good as an avowal.

"How!" resumed Swift, with a voice of thunder, "you are rich, and in order to get a paltry place you dare to sign a memorial in which you plead your poverty; this is abominable! It is robbing some poor devil of a livelihood."

This tremendous apostrophe restored to Craggs his voice, though not his impudence.

"Sir!" he stammered, "no doubt—appearances—but, Sir—I am not..."

"The purchaser?" thundered out Swift, in an awful tone of voice.—"That is, Sir,—I am—and I am not."

"Oh! I understand," said Swift, interrupting him, and softening his tone all at once: "you are only the ostensible purchaser, in order to oblige some one else..."

Craggs attempted to interrupt Swift in his turn. But once started in a lie, it would be difficult to track him back. Swift, therefore, took no heed of the attempt.

"Well! well! that explains it all. That is quite another thing! You have done quite right, nothing can be more simple or more natural! Why the deuce did you not say so at first? I am sorry that I was so hasty; but I'll try and make you amends. Look here; just alter that word. It won't be more difficult to get you made a clerk than an exciseman, and you will be richer by fifty guineas a year."

There was no refusing an offer made by so indulgent, so zealous a protector. The word was changed, and Craggs was in the act of withdrawing, bowing at every step, and pouring forth thanks at every bow, when Swift, who was conducting him to the door, in the blandest manner, stopped him suddenly, saying: "Wait a minute! a thought has just struck me. Suppose they were to raise objections at the office, on account of these accursed debts of which you are the supposed purchaser."

"Oh! there is no danger of that. Although it is in my behalf, the recovery of the debts is made out in the name of each separate creditor. Besides, I have insisted upon secrecy."

"Secrecy, indeed! as if anything could be kept secret among fifteen or twenty persons. Why I heard it! Deuce take it—you have put yourself in a false position."

"Mr. Philipps seemed to have forgotten his promise about a place in the Excise..."

"And you found this means of earning a few pounds. I understand—besides it is of no use to find fault now—we must see how you are to get out of this scrape. As far as I can judge, there is but one way,—you must go to your friend, Mr—"

Here Swift stopped, hoping that Craggs would let out

the name; but he avoided the snare, and Swift went on: "—Your employer. You must tell him that you can no longer continue to lend him your name."

"Oh, Sir! I never can venture to do that. He would not know what to do, and would be mortally angry with me."

"What are we to do, then? Your two characters are incompatible. I am very sorry; but it is quite impossible for me to speak to the minister in your behalf."

The unhappy candidate for place, thus fallen from the highest pinnacle of his hopes, stood aghast at this blow. But he suddenly recovered himself when he saw Swift advance towards the door, preparatory to bowing him out, and said, in a supplicating tone: "But, Sir, they will know nothing of all this at the Treasury."

"Don't be too sure of that; the Vanhomrigh affair has made a great noise."

"But, Sir, if you would be so very kind as to explain to them, in case it should all be known, that I am not the real purchaser. I am quite certain that they would take your word for it."

"I hope so, too; but the reason why my word is believed, is that I do not give it lightly. And what do I know about the matter after all? I don't even know the name of your principal."—"If that depended upon me, Sir..."

"I don't ask you to tell me. We never saw each other before; I can't expect you to trust me; and for the same reason, you will understand my scruples with respect to you."

With these words, Swift opened the door; but Craggs was in no hurry to leave the room, and looked piteously at Swift.

"Let us see," said Swift: "if I were willing to take Mr. Philipps's word for it, would you tell him your secret?"

"Mr. Philipps!—he is the last man in the world to whom I could mention it."—"Oh!—and Mr. Barrett?"

"Mr. Barrett, Sir?" Craggs reddened.

"It would be far easier to tell him the secret, would it not?"

Swift looked at him steadily; Craggs, who had at first

intended to deny this insinuation, changed countenance, and despairing to deceive Swift, said in a low voice: "I see, Sir, that you know all—but you will bear witness that it was not I who betrayed the secret."

"The facts themselves betrayed it. In order to make such a hit as this, something more was wanted than money and address; it was necessary also to be Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh's confidant. No one but Mr. Barrett united all three conditions. Make yourself perfectly easy; the place I hope to get you need cause you no remorse whatever."

So important a discovery raised Swift's pretensions considerably. He was resolved no longer to rest content with simply bringing back Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh from Holland. Swift went straight to Mr. Barrett. He determined to tell him, point blank, that his machinations were discovered—to threaten him with an action in the Court of Chancery for fraud in the exercise of his trust as guardian, unless the patrimony extorted from Esther were immediately restored to her. But, on his way thither, Swift reflected that it would be wiser to leave a retreat open to a man who had a reputation to lose; and he therefore addressed him in the most friendly tone: "My dear Mr. Barrett, I have come to beg your pardon. If you did but know what I have to reproach myself with; only think that I suspected you of the blackest, basest, most abominable action—that I was on the point of bringing an action of the most scandalous nature against you."

This strange apostrophe called forth no answer from Barrett; but he pushed up his spectacles, and stared Swift full in the face.

"Yes, my good Sir," continued Swift, "an action for fraud in the exercise of your trust as guardian—nothing less than that. I had already prepared my batteries; I was collecting witnesses and proofs; I was about to make use of all my credit with the ministry, more especially with the Lord Chancellor, Mr. Barrett; and you know on what terms I am with them."

Barrett, still silent, let his glasses fall back over his eyes.

"Fortunately," said Swift, "everything was explained; I met Craggs."

"Craggs?"—"Yes; Thomas Craggs—your humble friend—your man of straw—the pretended purchaser of Mrs. Esther Vanhomrigh's debts."

"I have no notion what you can mean."

This denial was made with the most startling coolness; but Swift had never expected to make an attorney blush.

"You don't know what I mean? Come, come, Mr. Barrett; now, that all the debts are bought up, you need not be so very discreet any longer. The only outstanding one was for eighty guineas, and here it is; it belongs to me. It is true that is cost me more than yours did; I did not buy it at eighty per cent. discount, like you; I had it at par, and accordingly I bow to your superior abilities. Ah, Ah! Mrs. Esther, you thought because you were come of age that you might ruin yourself as you liked. Not so fast, if you please. You have a guardian who is an able man and an honest man, who knowing your intention, secretly buys up all your debts at a low price, and, in spite of yourself, preserves your patrimony for you, Bravo! barvo! my excellent friend, this is a brave stratagem; such conduct is noble and rare."

By dint of praises and compliments, Swift hoped to induce Barrett to accept this construction. But honourable as it was, it was rather costly, and Barrett was too suspicious by nature to be easily taken by surprise. He entrenched himself behind the barriers of the law, and sought time for reflection. He wished first of all to see Craggs, to learn from him exactly how much was really known, and if there were not still some means of saving both the booty and appearances.

But what he learnt was not fitted to keep up his courage. Craggs did not possess the imperturbable assurance of his accomplice. To declare himself the *bonâ fide* purchaser of the debt, after the confession he had made, and his written declaration of poverty, required more audacity than Craggs possessed. The choice between the prospect of an action at law, which might end

ill, and a place in the Excise, was not even doubtful. Barrett was far too acute not to see that Craggs could not be depended upon.

On the other hand, Swift's credit, zeal, capacity, and excellent reputation, made him a formidable enemy. He would be supported by the creditors, who were annoyed at having been duped ; and then, supposing Barrett to triumph over so many obstacles, the action was one which, even if decided in his favour, would leave a slur upon his character. If he adopted Swift's version of his conduct, he would indeed have to give up very large gains ; but the chance of success now seemed very doubtful : moreover, it was only an absence of profit, not a real loss, seeing that the money he had advanced would be repaid him. On the other hand, as a compensation, instead of being branded by a damning prosecution, he would gain a reputation for generosity, which, turned to proper account, would bring him in a great deal. After well weighed the affair, Barrett made up his mind to pass for the paragon of guardians, and received with a tolerably good grace, the compliments of all the world, and the embraces of his kind-hearted colleague.

As soon as matters had taken this turn, Swift immediately returned to Holland, and his exertions were amply repaid by the joy he felt in announcing to Vanessa, not only that she was free, but that her fortune was restored, her mother's debts paid, and even her brother safe from arrest.

After so many painful scenes, London had become odious to Vanessa. Moreover, she wanted to live on her own estate, so as to make the most of it. Swift also was anxious to return as soon as possible to Dublin, in order to calm Stella's uneasiness, and to explain his conduct to the Archbishop, without whose sanction he had left Dublin. They, therefore, only spent a few days in London ; and as soon as Vanessa had thanked her old guardian, and settled half of her fortune upon her younger sister, they all three set off together for Dublin.

CHAPTER XXII.

MARLEY ABBEY had originally been a religious house, as its name implies. Time and war had converted it into a stronghold. But the castle itself—the ruins of a ruin—had been uninhabited for many years, and our fair travellers could not think of going there straight until they had ascertained the state of the building. They, therefore, stopped at an inn in Dublin; and Swift, leaving them to recover from the fatigues of their journey, went with all speed to Dunleary, where his return was expected with prodigious impatience by Dingley, and with equal anxiety by Stella.

Dingley was tortured by curiosity. What could be the meaning of this sudden departure, without notice, without taking leave of the Archbishop, who was furious at such want of respect? Stella contented herself with crying when she thought of the length of Presto's first absence. But no sooner had he reappeared than her tears were dried up. Dingley's questions were parried by a few jokes, and, as they were anxious to be at Dublin, where Swift had promised to settle them as soon as he became Dean, the conversation was easily turned to this subject, which entirely changed the course of their ideas.

"What a pity that you are not both of you sixty years old!" said he. "You should live at the Deanery. I have a large house for myself alone. I shall feel like an owl in it. You would enliven my solitude, and it would be a great saving."—"What a pity!" sighed Stella.

"We must not think of it," said he. "Well, where shall I lodge you? I don't even know whether I shall be able to find you a garden, and I have such a large one!"

"Oh, don't talk of a garden, Doctor!" exclaimed Dingley; "caterpillars and spiders'-webs all about,—and then the winter! To see nothing but withered leaves, and rows of tall black broomsticks standing topsy turvy! No, no, Doctor, let us have no trees—no noisy birds."

"You don't wish for it?—So much the better! You will be more easily satisfied. Would you like to live on *the Quay?*"

"On the Quay? Oh, dear no! We have had water enough here! We are quite sick of it; and then, if the water were only green, we could bear it; but to see it grey, yellow, and dirty—no, Doctor! much obliged to you! Lodge us in some nice central street, where there is something stirring."

"I understand! plenty of noise and dirt, eh?"

"Noise and dirt, if you please; anything rather than silence and solitude."

"Put us close to the Deanery," said Stella, "as close as possible."—"And the sooner the better," added Dingley.

Furnished with these instructions, Swift returned to Dublin to sleep, and the following morning, after having made some rather off-hand excuses to the Archbishop, who received them very coldly, Swift called for the two sisters at their inn. Marley Abbey was only ten miles from Dublin: they set out all three on horseback.

Vanessa had not been in Ireland for fourteen years, and she rejoiced in the idea of revisiting her old Abbey, which she had thought so grand, so large, and so terrible in her childhood. She rode at such a pace, that they soon came within sight of its walls.

Like most of the houses built by the monks, the old Abbey could be seen from a great distance; it stood half way up a hill-side. Faith, which is able to remove mountains, can still more easily remove wood and stones. Before reaching the Abbey they had to go a long way across the fields. These fields had once formed part of a vast park: but cultivation, like the flowing tide, had gradually filled up the ditch, broken down the wall and, these impediments once surmounted, had spread over the whole inner inclosure, destroying the walks, filling up the ponds, ploughing up lawns, uprooting trees, and reducing all things to one monotonous level.

Although these fields still belonged to Marley Abbey, and Swift pointed out the excellent quality of the soil, Vanessa was quite unhappy at seeing her beautiful park so outrageously cut up, her old oaks, her spacious flower-beds, her wide gravel walks, and all the grand proportions of her park narrowed into this small space, and threatened with a new and final invasion. But when they entered

the house itself, and she found the lofty rooms still standing, with their antique mouldings, their discoloured frescoes, their worm-eaten panelling, and all the remains of a splendour, which testified of the ancient and sacred character of the place, then indeed she was consoled. Each step awakened in her a thousand slumbering recollections. These fragments, though for the most shapeless, still were precious in her eyes; they were so many friends who greeted her on her return from banishment.

Swift too had a taste for art and for antiquities, and would no doubt have admired all he now saw in a museum. But he had not come to Marley Abbey as an artist, but as a guardian; he looked at everything with the eye of a steward. He did not lose sight of the fact, that this magnificent building was destined to shelter his young friend from the weather, and his attention was more taken up with the ruinous and desolate look of the rooms—the broken ceilings, the decayed floors, and the empty window-frames—than with all the remains of gothic tracery, of marble carvings, of tarnished hangings, cracked escutcheons, illegible inscriptions, niches without statues, and statues without heads. He would, without remorse, have sacrificed all these brilliant superfluities to the ignoble exigencies of daily life.

Mary was quite of the same mind. She was not remarkably brave, and the idea of living in the old house, in the company of bats and ghosts, frightened her exceedingly, and she begged to have the ugly old walls pulled down, and a pretty English cottage built in their place. But Vanessa was determined not to have her ruins spoilt; she called her sister a coward and a Vandal, and declared that she would live in the Abbey as it was.

Between these two extremes, Swift effected a compromise. The Abbey should not be pulled down to please Mary, but Esther should allow a certain number of rooms to be repaired, and furnished, which Swift had selected, while Vanessa was indulging in her poetic ecstasies. Like the birds whom their approach had frightened away, they should build their nests in the ruins; but he would take *care that their nest was neat, warm, and snug. In the meantime they should return to Dublin.*

This plan once settled, Swift's time was fully occupied for several days. He had three removals on his hands, besides attending to his duties. He had to be Dean, parish priest, architect, and upholsterer all in one; he had to rush from Dublin to Dunleary, from Dunleary to Marley Abbey, from Marley Abbey to Laracor: this was enough to try even his activity. But he got through all his work, thanks to his untiring zeal, and to Bolingbroke's exertions, and he even found means to devote many an hour to his two dear orphans, as he called the Vanhomrighs. As to Stella, he did not give her so sad a name, for was not he her father?

Stella, moreover, had Dingley to amuse her, not to mention the friends she had made in the neighbourhood; whereas Vanessa, who had left Ireland when she was but seven years old, knew nobody there, and in the unsocial frame of mind into which she had been thrown by her recent misfortunes, Swift was her sole resource. These considerations saved him from self-reproach as to the unequal distribution of his leisure hours: the more so, as no complaints were made at Dunleary of the rarity of his visits, which was attributed to his desire of hastening their arrival at Dublin.

But the days were short, and the distances long, and he had many different interests to watch over. Vanessa no longer inspired him with much confidence, as a man of business; and he would have thought himself much to blame if he had not himself controlled all the outlay at Marley Abbey. Neither did he look upon these material cares as the most important part of his duty. Grief is a disorder that demands the greatest care during convalescence, and of all the hours he gave up to his various employments, those passed with Vanessa did not appear to him the least usefully employed. Before exposing her to the trials of solitude, he wished to see her capable of supporting them. He talked to her of the past, in order to accustom her to face her painful recollections. He endeavoured to re-awaken in her a taste for literature and poetry, to excite in her a desire to finish her young sister's education, so that her duties and her tastes might serve to keep her company in her solitude, and preserve her

from those melancholy thoughts which the ruins were so likely to inspire.

Swift's affectionate solicitude soon bore its fruits. All traces of past suffering wore off: the patient was restored to life: those bursts of passion, to which she had formerly been subject, no longer disturbed the tranquil pleasures of their intimacy, or warned him of the necessity of greater circumspection, although the shady groves and mysterious ruins of the Abbey might well dispose the soul to tender effusions. These were good and tranquillising results. The consequence was, that for this charitable occupation, Swift had somewhat neglected his workmen; and Dingley was beginning to grumble at their slowness, and at the cold weather by the sea-side, when, fortunately for her, one evening as Swift was returning on horseback from Marley Abbey with the Vanhomrighs, he met Tisdal face to face.

The moon was at the full, and the sky cloudless; it was impossible to avoid a recognition. The two friends had met at the chapter-house, and although there was some coldness between them, there was no positive quarrel. The first impulse of the young Canon was to go straight up to the Dean; but at the sight of Vanessa he stopped short, with the air of a man hesitating whether or no he ought to advance. This discretion might pass for an impertinence, as he seemed to feel, for changing his mind a second time, he spoke to Swift. Having done so, instead of bowing and passing on, it was necessary to say something; he therefore asked after the health of Mrs. Johnston and Mrs. Dingley, and when they would leave Dunleary and settle in Dublin.

Swift was not exactly cunning: he knew better how to extricate himself from a false step than how to avoid it. Placed as he was between the two Esthers, a rake would have talked of the one to the other. Wishing to spare the feelings of both, Swift had abstained from this. He now repented, and cursed Tisdal in his heart, while he answered his question. On receiving his answer, Tisdal withdrew, but his departure by no means relieved Swift, who foresaw *many other* questions. During this short colloquy, Va-

nessa had been all attention, and no sooner was Tisdal out of hearing, than she asked who he was.

"He seems very shy," she replied, when she was satisfied on that point.

"Yes, he is somewhat awkward; he has very little knowledge of the world. He is the pattern of a country Curate."

Swift expected to be subjected to a thorough cross-examination. But these few words appeared to satisfy Vanessa, and they rode on for some time in silence. He scarce knew whether he ought to congratulate himself on this reserve on her part; it looked like indifference, but it might conceal suspicion, and he judged it prudent to enter at once into some kind of explanation. Accordingly he reverted to Tisdal's embarrassed air, attributing it to the coolness between them, and this coolness to the refusal of Stella's hand, whom he talked of with the air of a guardian.

"She refused him?" exclaimed Vanessa, who had listened to all he said without making any remark. "And why did she refuse him? he is very good looking, and he seems so gentle and modest. Is she in love with some one else?"

"How like you women?" said Swift, thumping the saddle-bow with his hand. "You cannot conceive it possible not to be in love!"

They had now reached the inn, where the two sisters were lodging. Swift wished them good night, and returned to the Deanery. He was vexed and uneasy. God knows what that sly fellow Tisdal might think of this evening's ride! Suppose he went gossiping about it to his Archbishop.

Considering how kindly his Grace was already disposed towards himself, that would be quite enough to renew the old annoyances at Laracor. Anyhow, it was a hint to act with more circumspection. Next morning early, Swift went to the tradesmen, and from this moment he hurried them so effectually that the three removals, which threatened never to be achieved, were over before the end of the week.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SWIFT's fears, however, were not realised. Vanessa's name was never mentioned at the Archbishop's Palace or elsewhere. Tisdal must have been very discreet or utterly unsuspecting. Swift resumed a more friendly air with him. But this encouraged him to renew his visits, and Swift felt that he could no longer keep Stella in ignorance of what had happened. His previous silence was easily excused; he had hitherto been forbidden to reveal a secret which was not his own. He therefore now narrated, to Beck and Stella, the cause of his mysterious journey, to reward them, as he said, for not having been too inquisitive. Vanessa's misfortunes—the hard trials which she and her sister had gone through—touched Stella's kind heart to the quick, and Dingley, although less feeling and more suspicious, could not resist the moving tale, and did not attribute the Dean's zeal to any other motive than the compassion which had found its way into her own breast.

This compassion had inspired the two ladies with a natural desire to become acquainted with the heroine of this interesting tale. But they easily understood that Vanessa just then shrunk from the light of new faces, and that quiet and solitude were necessary to enable her to recover from the violent shock she had sustained. The introduction was, therefore, indefinitely postponed, and Tisdal's reappearance almost caused it to be forgotten.

Stella could not help regretting that she had had to refuse Tisdal, spite of all Dingley's endeavours to lessen the importance of her refusal in her eyes; and indulgent like every woman who knows she is beloved, she wanted to ease her conscience by offering Tisdal all her friendship as a compensation for the love she could not give. After a long absence any one was sure of being well received by Dingley; and spite of the danger of cherishing a hopeless passion, Tisdal gave himself up with all the rashness of a lover to the charm of an intimacy, the loss of which he *had bitterly regretted*. Thus then, the good old days of *Trim* came over again in Stafford Street, where lodged

the two ladies of Saint Mary's, as Swift called them, from the name of the church opposite to their windows.

Swift was not the last to rejoice at this state of things. Besides the increased freedom which it gave him, and the increased time which he was able to spend with the fair recluses of Marley Abbey, the attentions lavished upon Tisdal were a guarantee that Dingley had given up her matrimonial project; and Swift congratulated himself upon having succeeded in restoring tranquillity to all their troubled hearts, when his security was disturbed by an event which, though frivolous in itself, was calculated to exercise the most disastrous influence over weak minds, by reviving extinguished hopes.

One morning while Stella was still lying lazily in bed, Dingley was told that one Mr. Partridge wished to speak with her. Partridge! She knew no one of that name, except the cheat and impostor unmasked by Isaac Bickerstaff, and he surely was dead. She went down stairs, and found at the foot of the stairs a fat, short man of about fifty, who was pacing up and down the passage in an agitated manner, and who asked her if she was Mrs. Dingley. She answered, yes, and opened the parlour door.

"Madam," said the stranger, the moment she had closed it behind them, "Do you believe that the dead can speak?"

Dingley looked at him with amazement.

"Do you believe that the dead walk? do you believe the dead eat?"

Dingley began to be frightend, and at each question she retreated a step or two instead of answering.

"You don't believe it, do you, Ma'am? Well then, undeceive yourself, because you see I can speak!" his voice made the windows shake. "You see, I can walk!" and he paced up and down the room with huge strides. "You see, I can eat!" and he bit with such fury into an orange which he took off the table, that the juice squirted into Mrs. Dingley's face. "I can do all this, you see! and yet, Ma'am, as sure as I'm alive, I'm a dead man! dead! dead! dead!"

His eyes were starting out of his head: without doubt

he was mad. Dingley pinned against the wall, looked towards the door in agony, and longed for the arrival of Swift, whom she expected to breakfast.

"Yes, Ma'am, I am dead!" continued the little man, taking no notice of the fear he inspired: "I've been dead these nine long months! dead ever since the 29th of March last, as predicted by the infallible Isaac Bickerstaff."

"Bickerstaff! the 29th of March! Partridge!"

"John Partridge, astronomer, astrologer, and physician to His Majesty, and very much at your service," said the little man bowing.

"Is it possible? How's this? So you are not dead after all? Pray be seated; allow me to offer you some refreshment."

She pushed a large arm-chair close to the table; she placed a footstool under his feet; she poured all the cream into the cup intended for Swift: never did a devotee take greater care of her confessor. The fat little man received her attentions very complacently. He ate and drank, no doubt, in order to confirm the fact of his existence, and with his mouth still full, he continued in a tragical tone: "Ah, Ma'am, when I say I am John Partridge, I ought rather to say that I am but the shadow of what he was. You cannot conceive the tribulations I have endured since an ignorant impostor took it upon himself to banter me out of my life, and to bawl me out of the world by a pack of villanous, deep-mouthed hawkers—since that fatal twenty-ninth of March. On that day, Madam,—on that very day, I heard the bells tolling for me; a sober, grave person came to hang my room with black cloth and sconces; the sexton came to ask if there were any orders for a funeral sermon; where I was to be laid; and whether the grave was to be plain or bricked; they sang the psalms for the dead under my very window; the undertaker sent home my coffin, and a couple of damned rogues wanted to bury me."

"You had fallen into a swoon, then?"—"Nothing of the sort."

"You were only ill?"—"I was not even ill. I was as well as I am now."

"Really! then how did it all come to pass?"

"Prejudice, Madam, nothing but prejudice. Alackaday, when a man's death is once in print, he is looked upon by his neighbours as if he had been dead seven years, and is buried alive in the midst of his friends and acquaintance."

"It is partly your own fault. Why did you give up the game? You no longer publish anything: you ought to have given the lie direct to that rogue, Bickerstaff."

"So I did, Madam," cried Partridge, pulling broadsides out of all his pockets. "I have printed two almanacs, and published one, two, three, four, five, true and impartial accounts to the public: though I produce certificates under the minister's and churchwardens' hands that I am alive, and attest the same on oath at Quarter Sessions, truth is borne down, attestation neglected: it is all pains thrown away. No one would buy my 'advertisements.'"

"You ought to have distributed them gratis."

"That's what I did; but no one would read them. What was to be done? it is in vain that I take my affidavit in a Court of Justice; my wife is run almost distracted with being called Widow Partridge, when she knows it is false. Once a term, she is cited into the court to take out letters of administration. And not only the sexton, who tolled the bell—the undertaker who made the coffin—the embalmers and joiners—the sober and grave person who took the dimensions of the room, and sent the black cloth and sconces—but a cursed stone-cutter, who made the monument, sent in their bills and pressed for immediate payment. Nay, the very reader of our parish has sent two or three times for me to come and be buried decently, or to send him sufficient reasons for the contrary; or, if I have been interred in any other parish, to produce my certificate, as the Act requires."

"But the greatest grievance is a paltry quack that takes up my calling just under my nose, and in his printed directions with N.B., says he lives in the house of the late ingenious Mr. John Partridge, an eminent practitioner in leather, physic, and astrology. After such barbarous treatment as this, no resource was left me but to visit all who took in my almanac, and prove to them that I was

really and truly alive. This was a cruel mortification for me! astronomer, astrologer, and physician to his Majesty! at my time of life, too! and with my reputation, honoured as I was with the confidence of all the Courts of Europe; I who could show you thousands of complimentary letters—above a hundred of which are written in the Latin tongue, from every quarter of the inhabited globe, some from Muscovy, in which I am never spoken of otherwise than as the most illustrious restorer of astrology; the bright star of England; it was bitter humiliation to be driven to knock like a beggar at every door. Even this I could have borne, had I but always been so fortunate as to meet with such enlightened persons as yourself, my dear Madam; but every door was shut in my face...”

“Is it possible?”—“Worse—it is true. I was called a cheat and an impostor to my face. I was told that I was dead.”

“No doubt—by such as knew you only by name; those who had seen you...”

“Most of those, Madam, saw some resemblance to myself, but nothing more. ‘Lord,’ says one, ‘I durst have sworn that was honest Doctor Partridge, my old friend: but, poor man, he is gone.’ ‘I beg your pardon,’ says another, ‘you look so like my old acquaintance that I used to consult; but, alack! he’s gone the way of all flesh.’ ‘Look! look!’ cries a third, after a competent space of staring at me, ‘would not one think our neighbour the almanac-maker was crept out of his grave?’ Even those who did recognise me took me for a ghost, and fled in very terror.”

“How dreadful! I pity you with all my heart! what do you mean to do?”

“Persevere, my dear Madam, persevere, with your assistance, and that of your friends and acquaintances, if you will kindly recommend me to them, and give me their address. I ask but one favour—to be read! Once read, the truth will be manifested in all its splendour: the dead shall arise, and Bickerstaff be confounded.”

He was proceeding in this oracular strain, and Dingley, *carried away* by his eloquence, had accepted a huge *packet of his broadsides*, and in return was dictating to

him the addresses of her friends, when one made his appearance, whose name she certainly did not propose to include in the list—the Dean of St. Patrick's.

At the sight of him, Dingley coloured up to the tips of her ears. It was clearly impossible to deceive him as to the nature of the visit: the table was strewn with broadsides and almanacs. She attempted to excite his interest in Partridge's story.

"You know, Doctor," said she, going up to him, "Mr. Partridge! whom we all thought dead! Only think! how strange! he is alive! and that Isaac Bickerstaff is a cheat after all!"

"Yes, Sir, a cheat, an abominable cheat! as you may convince yourself by reading this."

Partridge had risen from his arm-chair at the same time as Dingley, and pulling a fresh assortment of advertisements out of his capacious pockets, he handed them to the Dean. But Swift, instead of taking them, put his hands behind him and said: "Sir, if you know the past as well as you pretend to know the future, you must be aware that some three centuries ago, the son of a baker—one Lambert Simnel—gave himself out to be the son of the Duke of Clarence, and was crowned in Ireland, where we now are. This King of an hour died a scullion in the kitchen of the king whose name he had usurped."

"All the world knows that, Sir," said Partridge, pompously.

"You, like the rest of the world, must also be aware that some years afterwards, one Perkin Warbeck passed himself off as the Duke of York, the younger brother of Edward V. This impostor did not escape so easily as Lambert Simnel; he was imprisoned, and put to death."

"Well, Sir! and what has all this to do with the question?"

"Excuse me. If you are as well versed in the history of foreign states as you are in that of your own, you ought likewise to be aware that about a hundred years ago, in Muscovy, no less than six different adventurers, the Dimitri, successively raised the like pretensions, and all six were put to death. These wretches were men *without honour, without conscience, and, above all, without*

sense. For impostors always end miserably. But at any rate their aim was one fitted to rouse ambition and desire: they coveted a crown—not the cast-off clothes of an almanac-maker.”

“My God! my God!” exclaimed the little man, stamping with exasperation. “All the world is in the same story! I am always treated as an impostor! I am dead, then! What! I am dead, am I? It is enough to drive a man mad! But read, and you’ll see. Read this! Only read, I say!” And he held out his advertisements to Swift, who rejected them with scorn.

“Read that trash? Do I look very like a fool?”—“A fool? Yes, that you are, if you believe that impostor, Bickerstaff!”

“At any rate he has been right once.”—“This is too bad! quite too bad. My hat! where is my hat? I can’t stay and listen to such things! Ah, so I am not John Partridge?”

“And suppose you were, what confidence are we to place in an astrologer who could not foresee the day of his own death?”

“It must be confessed that it is not much to your credit,” exclaimed Dingley.

The confusion into which Partridge had been thrown by rage, seemed catching. Dingley mistook an Irish bull for a serious argument. Swift did not give Partridge time to recover; and when the living deceased, whose breath had been taken away by the last apostrophe, began to revive, and made an attempt to enter into explanations, Swift shut his mouth by exclaiming, with a voice that bore down all opposition: “We have had enough of this. This lady is right: we are not to be duped by you! Go and hawk your drugs among kitchen wenches and old women in their dotage! False kings are hanged: false astrologers are kicked out of doors.”

He suited the action to the word. Dingley, flattered by his approbation, picked up all Partridge’s advertisements and almanacs, and tossing them into his hands, helped Swift to turn the astrologer out of the house.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PARTBRIDGE once more consigned to the grave, and with him all belief in his predictions, Swift might think himself safe. The idea of his marriage with his ward at length seemed to be given up by every one; Tisdal's demeanor showed an intention on his part to try his chance with Stella a second time, and from the manner in which they received him, Stella and Dingley seemed disposed to encourage his addresses. How could Swift guess that a hidden storm lurked beneath this tranquil surface? How could he guess above all, that Tisdal, in love as he was with Stella—Tisdal, who had taken fresh courage and hope—was about to desert his own cause, and to revive the whole intrigue.

On hearing of the appointment of his old Vicar to the Deanery of St. Patrick's, the first impulse of the young Canon had been to solicit a change of residence. Mrs. Johnson was going to settle in Dublin, and he still maintained that absence alone could cure his passion. But this change could not be effected at a day's notice, he must wait until some preferment should fall in; and there was no immediate hurry, as Mrs. Johnson was to spend the summer at Dunleary. Tisdal himself, having satisfied the claims of prudence, by making the request, awaited the result very patiently; and the Archbishop not being importuned, made no very active exertions to bring about a separation which he himself would regret. Things were in this state of suspense, and our lover knew not whether most to fear or to desire the sight of his mistress, when he met the Dean riding with Vanessa.

As his embarrassed air had shown, this fair apparition had, by the soft light of the moon, seemed to him far too enchanting not to be somewhat suspicious, and the old stories about Kilroot and Laracor suddenly crowded back on his memory. Most likely Swift would once more be able to justify himself; but no one could so often need justification with impunity, and honour may be worn out by too frequent washing, just like anything else.

These uncharitable suspicions, dictated by soreness of

feeling, had led him to resume his visits to Mrs. Johnson; and there, whatever scruples still remained, were dispelled, as soon as he discovered that she was not acquainted with the mysterious beauty who was abroad so late on horse-back.

It was in vain that they repeated to him the touching history of the misfortunes of the Vanhomrigh family: in vain that they praised the zeal and the devotion of Presto; Tisdal's heart, hardened by mistrust, was proof against pity, or admiration. Presto's young friends were far too handsome to leave any room for wonder at his zeal in their service; and the purity of his ward sufficiently explained why his devotion had changed its object.

It was in vain that Swift made all the overtures towards a reconciliation, and was prodigal of advances and demonstrations of friendship. Tisdal was inflexible. It was in vain that the Dean left the field open to him. Tisdal accepted his invitations, and took advantage of his absences, without feeling the slightest obligation in return. If his conscience occasionally smote him, it was not with ingratitude for so many good offices, but over-indulgence towards Swift's immorality. He reproached himself with favouring it, and making himself in a manner his accomplice by taking his place with the ladies of St. Mary's. Alas! he thought, self-interest had stifled in him all virtuous indignation! Every year he became more lax: formerly his moral principles had been far stronger! But when, after reading himself a long and severe lecture, the hour for going to see Mrs. Johnson drew near, he was no longer so sure that the Dean's conduct was bad. Why should he not attribute to him perfectly legitimate intentions? Swift, it is true, had an aversion to marriage: but time alters men's views, and practice is a very different thing to theory. Who could tell but what the Dean repented of the manner in which he had received his rival's proposal last year, and was holding back in order to give him every facility to renew his suit?

What! and expose himself again to the humiliation of a refusal? But was he to sacrifice his only chance of happiness to a feeling of false pride? Was he to regard

as lost a cause pleaded without passion, without zeal, by a third party? Was Esther at all aware of the degree to which she was beloved? And how different was everything this year. This year Swift was favourable to his suit; and might not this change be owing to a corresponding one in Esther's feelings?

She was no longer the frivolous child she had been at Trim, whose attention nothing could fix, who bounded from place to place, and from thought to thought, as a bird hops from branch to branch. She was now quite changed; she had become grave, and even thoughtful. She now seldom played at battledore and shuttlecock, cards, or any of her former games; her evenings were spent in conversation on matters so serious, that Dingley, after a certain number of yawns, never failed to fall asleep in her arm-chair.

Tisdal, therefore, usually found himself in fact alone with Stella. During these evening conversations, when their voices were lowered so as not to awaken the sleeper, when they drew closer together in order to hear each other's whispers, what were they to talk about but love? And when Tisdal saw that Stella—motionless, flushed, and all attention—heeded the hours that passed as little as he did himself, when he marked her curiosity assume a thousand ingenious disguises, her eyes every minute fill with tears, and found that her mind was able to fathom the height and depth of that most mysterious of sentiments which he himself had but just learned by his own experience to understand—was it not natural that he should think that her heart only could so rapidly have enlightened her head?

Tisdal, seeing no rival in the field, was greatly disposed to interpret these symptoms of love in his own favour; and, in order to feel his way, he had made use of all the vague and covert expressions, indirect questions, and avowals which might be withdrawn, that are to be found in the vocabulary of lovers. He exhausted everything of this kind that could be suggested by pride and modesty, fear and desire. But he was still very far from venturing a formal explanation. He was not of an enterprising nature, and the falseness of his position added to

his embarrassment. Every morning he resolved to speak and every evening he put it off till next day. He wanted pressure from without, and here the Archbishop came to his assistance. Much against his own wish, he had at length found Tisdal another living, and the latter could not now draw back. On the first evening that the Dean was absent, and Dingley fast asleep in her arm-chair—an opportunity which occurred very soon—Tisdal, after giving the conversation, as usual, a direction favourable to an avowal, announced the determination he had taken.

"Going!" said Stella. "You mean to go—to leave us alone!"—"Alone? Why you have the Dean."

"Oh, don't call him by that name! Ever since he has been made a Dean, you know how he has neglected us!"—"Because he has more to do."

"Yes, yes," said she, shaking her head sadly; "I thought so at first, but now I see more clearly."

Tisdal, speechless from anxiety, awaited an explanation of her words; but she continued: "Is your new living a much better one?"—"Not at all better."

"And are you forced to accept it?"—"No: it was I who asked for the change."

"You asked for it! Ah! you forsake me as he has done; you forsake me because I am not wise or serious enough for you. I weary you."

She made a vain effort to smile: two big tears gave the lie to this false gaiety.

She wept!—wept at the thought of his going! Was not this an avowal of love! And yet there was the refusal of last year! But this refusal had only been communicated to him by a third person! What if Mrs. Dingley, devoted to Swift's interests, had so eagerly offered her mediation only in order to insure the failure of the negotiation? What a suspicion! He resolved to clear up the point.

"Tell me," said he, in an almost inarticulate voice, "last year I begged Mrs. Dingley to ask you a question."

"A question?"—"Yes, and a very important one for my happiness."

Stella looked down.

"Did she ask it?"—"She did."

"And the refusal which she brought me came from your lips—from your heart?"—"Not without pain, I can assure you."

"Not without pain! but you did refuse me. But if the same question were asked again?"

Stella looked on the ground in silence.

"And you ask me why I go? Why but to fly from you; in your presence I am ever on the rack."

With the obstinacy of a lover, he did not yet despair of receiving some encouragement. But receiving none, he suddenly rose, and walked into the parlour. Stella followed him.

"I am, then, the cause of much pain to you, Mr. Tisdal," said she, going up to him.

"To love with all one's soul," muttered Tisdal, "and to get nothing in return but indifference and contempt..."

"Oh, Mr. Tisdal."

"I beg your pardon. I know that I may count upon your friendship; but friendship is so cold and unsatisfactory."

"Too true," said Stella, interrupting him; "at times one would prefer hatred. At any rate, one would then know one's fate; one would, at least, have a right to complain."

Tisdal looked at her with astonishment.

"Oh, Mr. Tisdal, you must not be angry with me. I, too, am very miserable. He does not love me, Mr. Tisdal. Oh, it's too sure he does not love me."

Swift! It was Swift she loved. If she had not named him, it was because there could be no doubt on the subject. What a blow for Tisdal. He stood there as if thunderstruck: his sweet illusions were dispelled. Nothing was left for him but to lie down and die.

But Esther, with the security of innocence, laid her aching brow upon his shoulder; and when he felt the weight of this precious burden, it seemed to him as if this other victim of the same shipwreck clung to him for safety in their common danger. A profound pity—pity which can only be felt in that degree for those we love when suffering the same evils as we ourselves suffer—re-awakened in him the wish to live, and restored to him the strength of

which despair had robbed him. Poor child ! she looked to him for protection : her simple confidence imposed a new duty upon him. The sacrifice of his own love was consummated. From that moment he would live only for hers. All the passion that glowed in his soul, every drop of blood in his veins, he would henceforth devote to one object—Stella's marriage with his rival.

A quarter of an hour sooner, he would have thought it impossible to succeed in such an attempt ; but after the sacrifice of his own love, nothing seemed difficult to him. What can stay the impulse of an heroic resolution ? What lover can believe that his mistress is not irresistible ?

Tisdal, with the most perfect good faith, heaped consolations upon her ; and after recapitulating all the marks of tenderness which her guardian had lavished upon her, dwelt upon the irritation which Swift had been unable to control, when her hand had been asked of him in marriage, and omitted nothing that could fill her heart with that hope which had left his own aching breast.

Poor Stella trembled with pleasure at hearing these intoxicating words, which were confirmed by a thousand recollections which crowded upon her mind, suggested by her long after happiness. But she was still oppressed by doubts—doubts, indeed, which only waited to be dispelled, and she did not yield herself up entirely to the temptation of hope, until she learnt Tisdal's generous determination.

He announced it to her with so much simplicity, that modesty as well as passion prevented the loving girl from appreciating the full extent of the sacrifice he was making ; she accepted it, therefore, without hesitation ; but as soon as this first impulse was over, she interrupted her own expressions of gratitude, and said, with a deep blush : " And what of yourself, Mr. Tisdal ? "

" Oh, never mind me ! " said he, " there are more joys than one in love ; and in default of the greatest of that which is denied to me, and which Providence has in store for you, one real happiness is still left to me—to devote myself to the service of her I love. You have accepted me as your friend and confidant ; I am not so much to be pitied. I shall rejoice in your happiness."

Esther was too much moved to speak ; she gave him her

hand. He pressed, but did not carry it to his lips ; and holding it in his, they stood in silence at the window, she leaning her burning brow against the pane, lost in a sweet reverie, he standing beside her, watching over her, like a mother over her sleeping child.

The sky was spangled with stars, across which light, fleecy clouds were driven by the wind. From among these stars Stella had singled out one for herself, and one for Swift ; and she watched with superstitious fear lest their rays should be obscured by a passing cloud. Her fears were realised, and this evil omen roused her jealousy, and forced from her a question, which, no doubt, had often risen to her lips ere this.

"She is very handsome, is she not ?" asked she of Tisdal, in a low voice.

Perhaps it would have been more humane not to have understood whom she meant, but it would have been an untruth : and, moreover, it would have forced her to pronounce the name of her rival. He therefore answered : "You know I only saw her once, and not very clearly : it was at night."

He told the truth, but not the whole truth ; for either owing to his own suspicions or from the effect of the moonlight, Vanessa had struck him as remarkably beautiful. Thinking that his answer might be taken for what it was—a manner of avoiding the question—he hastened to add : "Her complexion is light," which, according to his lover-like ideas, was a very great drawback.

"Dark men like fair women," said Stella.—"How can you say that to me !" exclaimed Tisdal.

"Forgive me ! I am ashamed of being so selfish, and before you too !"

"Be so still ! It is not every one who can ! One must have hope in order to be selfish."

Stella raised her eyes to heaven. The two stars she had chosen were again visible. Heaven, too, bid her hope, and her heart was once more at rest.

At this moment it struck ten by St. Mary's clock. This was the hour at which Dingley went to bed : she accordingly rose, which was the signal for Tisdal's departure.

CHAPTER XXV.

VANESSA had expressed a wish to know Tisdal; and as she continued to live in complete seclusion, Swift did not think fit to refuse her the diversion of his company, which would have the additional advantage of relieving their intimacy from the appearance of being clandestine, and of justifying him from those suspicions to which determination to prevent the two Esthers from meeting might have given rise. He had therefore offered to introduce Tisdal at the Abbey; but the latter had hitherto evaded the proposal. All his leisure hours belonged to Esther Johnson; moreover, he felt that he was invited merely as a blind—a character repugnant to his conscience, and, indeed, to his self-love, little as he had of that. Besides, he was interested in discovering the nature of the connection between the Dean and Mrs. Vanhomrigh; and this consideration, which would have determined any one else to accept the invitation, was his chief reason for refusing it. He could only go to Marley Abbey as a spy, and he was not one of those who thought anything fair in love.

But when he had to act as a spy in the interests of Esther Johnson, his scruples ceased.

The doubts which had been dispelled by the enthusiasm accompanying a generous action, and by the wish to minister consolation, returned in full force to his mind: they could only be solved at the Abbey, and Stella herself pressed him to go. Since Swift no longer talked of taking her to see the Vanhomrighs, and she did not venture to repeat her request, she at any rate wished to behold her rival through the eyes of the good Doctor. Tisdal accordingly went.

His account of his first visit was very encouraging. The enemy was much less formidable than she had at first appeared: Mrs. Vanhomrigh was tall, fair, and fat; she was not the least like Mrs. Johnson. Tisdal could not have thought it possible that the light of the moon could have embellished any one so much.

And then, such manners!—For breeding as for beauty,

he had but one model ; and he admired all other women, exactly in proportion as they resembled Stella. In love and inexperienced, he was naturally exclusive in his tastes ; and he could not conceive a young girl with any other excellencies than modesty, reserve, timidity, engaging ignorance, ingenuous wonder and constant blushes, in short, all the simple graces of youth. Thus, when he saw a young woman of one-and-twenty do the honours of her house with an ease and assurance which he envied at near thirty—when he heard her talk on all subjects with a tone of decision which he had hitherto looked upon as peculiar to complete maturity of mind—when he heard her conversing on all subjects, and, apparently from good-breeding, exhausting none though seeming able to exhaust all—he was dazzled and astonished by this varnish of worldly education, which simulates a perfect experience of life and a universal range of human knowledge. But the more he admired Mrs. Vanhomrigh, the less dangerous he thought her. Delicately white and red as was her skin, she was a man. She was not engaging. She was a person whom it would be impossible to love ; and he hastened to inform Mrs. Johnson of the fact.

Poor Stella ! how impatiently she awaited the result of his observations, and with what joy she heard it ! But when Tisdal returned to seek fresh information, he repented of having been in such haste to cause her this joy. When the constraint of a first introduction was over, and the little party was once more at ease, Tisdal could not shut his eyes to the fact that Mrs. Vanhomrigh was Swift's favourite, and that his preference was owing to the very qualities which had made him so confident of Stella's ultimate victory.

Swift was no longer young, and in him the brain had always predominated over the heart ; he, was therefore, sure to be attracted by an intellectual sympathy. He liked women's society, but he liked politics and literature better ; and he was able to indulge these serious tastes in an intimacy with Mrs. Vanhomrigh.

It would be hard to find an author who does not like to read his works to an attentive and intelligent hearer ; and when Swift had been writing all the morning, he was

very glad to ask his young friend's opinion of what he had done; for, ardently as she admired him, she was blind to his defects; her independence of character placed her above all prejudices either of the head or of the heart, and her blame gave additional zest to her praise.

Stella certainly could not hope to contend with her rival in this field. She knew how to love Presto, to obey him to prevent his slightest wishes, inwardly to delight in his presence, and to weep over his neglect in secret; but as to appreciating his wit, knowing how to praise, and daring to find fault with him, taking an interest in serious conversation, or enlivening it by an interchange of ideas, she had never dreamed of such a thing, nor had Presto ever thought of expecting it from her. Dear child! he took good care not to play the pedant with her. But then, when he had spent an hour in fooling for her amusement, he felt that his task was done, and he went to the Abbey in search of recreation for himself.

Having once ascertained how much lower Stella stood in Swift's good graces than Vanessa, what chance of success could he see? If it had been his own case, Tisdal would have given up the game, but it was Esther Johnson's.

What was Dingley's surprise on learning that, while she was asleep, Stella and Doctor Tisdal had concerted a whole scheme of education.

"My dear, what could put such a thing in your head?"

"We want to surprise Presto, Beck; pray don't say a word to him," replied Stella, blushing.

"Surprise Presto, forsooth!" thought Dingley. "What a pretence! That rogue of a Doctor has supplanted our dear Presto; the two hypocrites have hit upon these lessons as an excuse for being always together."

Dingley felt quite relieved. Ever since Stella had chosen another confidant, she had been reduced to mere conjectures, and could not understand what was passing around her. To have lost the thread of her own intrigue was really too cruel.

And then that Tisdal was such a strange fellow! Ever since they had been settled in Dublin, she had encouraged his attentions with the view of either stirring up Presto

to propose, or at worst of putting up with him for want of a better husband for Stella; and now, at the very moment that she had resolved to let him have her, and that Stella seemed much of the same mind, he, too, had let those Vanhomrighs get hold of him! and Stella, instead of taking offence, had been the first to send him to their house! It was not that she was in a huff, or she would not have received him so well when he did still deign to visit them. Perhaps they had given each other up by mutual consent. Very well! so let them! Dingley was quite content they should do as they pleased, and had fallen asleep again in her arm-chair, when she was awakened by this queer project of education. So, so. She was resolved that she would soon come to the bottom of it. So they wanted to throw dust in her eyes, did they? Very well, very well!

Tisdal came regularly every morning and evening to give his lessons, and Dingley as regularly favoured them with her presence, moved as much by curiosity as by a sense of propriety. She was, however, amazed by the dissimulation of both master and scholar, who worked morning and evening with untiring industry. They must, indeed, be anxious to deceive her! For the idea that Stella could be industrious, or take pleasure in all this pedantry, was too absurd.

"Oh! they want to tire me out, do they? we'll see. If I have to listen to their prosing for a whole year, I'll force them to own the truth at last, I'm determined."

Dingley was resolved not to be beaten. She did not trust either to her curiosity or her vexation to keep her awake. She privately drank every day several cups of strong coffee without milk, and unflinchingly performed her part of Argus.

But weeks and months passed away without cooling the exemplary ardour of our two hypocrites. Dingley was wearied beyond endurance. Two or three cups of coffee were no longer enough for her: she was forced to drink as many as eight, and one evening she dropped asleep in spite of all. She bitterly regretted her weakness, when she reflected what a store of fresh courage and dissimulation the lovers might have been able to lay

in during her unlucky nap. Dingley would have been unable to console herself for such a slip, but that it suggested to her an excellent thought. She was resolved to fall asleep again, but it should be voluntarily and only in appearance.

In order the better to prepare her stratagem, she pretended to yawn, and to struggle the whole day against the sleep she was to indulge in during the evening. When her eyes were shut the lesson went on just as usual: no doubt they were waiting till she should be fast asleep. Accordingly, ere long, Stella lowered her voice, and asked Tisdal in the most affectionate tone: "How do you find yourself?"

To which he answered, with deep emotion: "Thank you, I shall get better, I hope; let us say no more about it."

Dingley pricked up her ears. At last the cat would be let out of the bag. No such thing: no further disclosures were made, and the pedantry recommenced with inconceivable ardour, and lasted without interruption until the hour of departure.

And yet Dingley had done nothing to alarm them. She had not even blinked. Perhaps, however, she might have started on seeing them fall into the trap. Next day she would control herself more completely. So she did, but with no better success. As on the former evening, Stella asked the Doctor how he was; he made the same answer in the same grateful tone, and resumed his teaching.

"How ill you look," cried Dingley, when he returned the next day; "what is the matter with you?"—"With me! Nothing," replied he, with an air of amazement.

"I don't see that the Doctor looks ill," said Stella.

Not ill! Then what could be the meaning of the mysterious dialogue which took place every evening? Unless, indeed, he had been suddenly cured of his disease the night before. But no; the usual conversation was repeated that very evening. Dingley did not content herself with the evidence of her ears alone; she peeped slyly at them, and what should she see, but Esther giving *her hand to Tisdal*, which she never did before witnesses, *and Tisdal squeezing it most tenderly.*

Dingley was strongly tempted to jump up, and ask them what was the meaning of all this ; but she was restrained by the thought that she should get no explanation from such thorough hypocrites. It would be better to persevere in her pretence of sleeping. By dint of perseverance, however, she only found that she was taking a great deal of trouble to very small purpose. Did anybody ever see the like ? A pair of lovers who were content to ask after each other's health, and to press each other's hands once a-day, and who, when they were alone together, talked about nothing but politics, literature, history, and philosophy. She was a fool to waste her time in listening to them. Hereupon Mrs. Dingley took to her arm-chair and her slumbers in right earnest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MEANWHILE Tisdal, spite of all appearances to the contrary, was working steadily on at his task. Convinced that the Dean would never consent to marry a woman whose intellect was too far beneath his own, Tisdal wanted to enable Esther Johnson to stand the comparison with Mrs. Vanhomrigh. He did not, indeed, imagine that he should be able to store her mind with an equal amount of information ; but surely her inferiority would be overlooked in the astonishment and gratitude which her efforts could not fail to raise in Swift's mind.

Supported by this hope, Tisdal courageously performed the task he had set himself. And what a task ! To withstand the temptation of every moment ; to repress every impulse of his heart, and to let none but the coldest words escape from his burning soul ; to control his attention, distracted by a thousand eager desires ; to forget—nay, to give up his inclinations, his feelings, his very self, in order to adopt the tastes and opinions of his rival, and to teach his mistress how to make herself beloved by another. Truly he did need courage, but he needed it most of all when he had to form his Esther to those wordly manners which had so shocked him in the

other. But it was not himself she had to please ; and with conscientious resignation he stripped her of her simple graces, her ingenuousness, her charming ignorance ; he removed, one by one, the veils of innocence and maidenly frankness.

They were bitter tears that fell back on his heart, whilst he purposely deprived her of all that had charmed him most in her ; he felt that he was losing her for a second time. If the first sacrifice of his love had been heroic, what name can be given to this self-abnegation in detail, to this unceasing holocaust which followed it ?

Stella had never had a real taste for study ; but she had a great distrust of her own powers, and persons of her character are prone to imitation. Mrs. Dingley's example had led her into listless habits ; and now that of Mrs. Vanhomrigh, quoted from time to time, roused her zeal to the utmost. She thirsted after hope ; she had confidence in her guide, and jealousy egged her on ; she displayed a degree of aptitude and perseverance which surpassed the expectations of her master.

But the Dean came seldomer than ever ; no one could lend himself better than he did to the surprise they were preparing for him ; and the two students had as much leisure as they could possibly desire. He had heard something of the lessons ; but, like Dingley, he put on an air as if he thought it a merely lover's stratagem ; and no sooner had he entered the room, than he said with a smile : " I won't interrupt you." And away he went to the Abbey.

What sorrow would this have caused Stella, had not Tisdal, with that ingenuity which the heart alone can inspire, excused every absence, and prevented all suspicion ! But the more Tisdal endeavoured to excuse Swift's conduct, the more excuses he had to make. It was time to prove that Esther was working to some purpose, and to make known her object in so doing. It struck Tisdal that the new year would be a good opportunity for her to declare her passion. She should profit by the license of poetry to make the avowal.

The worst was, that neither Tisdal nor Stella had the slightest knowledge of the rules of versification. But

Mrs. Vanhomrigh made verses, and Stella was determined to make some too ; and as for him, it was not the first time in his life that he had learnt in order to teach. He bought a treatise on prosody, and studied it unceasingly with his pupil. They then recommended themselves to Apollo, and Stella produced a small poem, which cost them both many days' labour.

But when the work is done to the satisfaction of the author, the labour is soon forgotten ; and the chaste avowal was wrapped up in an allegory that was at the same time so delicate and so transparent, that Tisdal promised himself wonders from its effect.

And, indeed, Swift showed great surprise and satisfaction, and Stella blushed with delight. But a few days after, Tisdal was grieved to find that the loving girl's effusion was looked upon as one of those birthday compliments which a schoolmaster dictates to his pupils. He was walking home from her lodgings with Swift, and it was the first time that they had been alone together, since the verses had been written. The whole way home the Dean did nothing but call him "Poet."

Thus, then, he had gained nothing by all his trouble but a nickname! Tisdal expostulated, denying that he was the author, and owning only to have given some advice.

"Well, then," said Swift, "you should have given more, and not allowed her to make a false quantity."

A false quantity! This, then, was the only thing that had caught his attention! not a word about the sentiments expressed in the poem.

"Mrs. Vanhomrigh writes verses too," pursued Swift, without hearing Tisdal's sighs : "but between ourselves, my dear Poet, they are somewhat better."

"Because she has a better master," said Tisdal, mortified, but not on his own account.

"She has no need of a master," replied Swift; "listen to this, Mr. Tutor."

He knew Mrs. Vanhomrigh's verses by heart! All the time he was walking, he recited them with such fervour that the passers-by turned round to look at him. Tisdal *knew better than not to praise them, for he was determined*

not to appear jealous on his own account, and still less Stella's.

"Are they not really beautiful?" said Swift, taking Tisdal's applause to the letter.

And he repeated them over again with fresh enthusiasm. This second edition of the verses was followed by a commentary of the most flattering kind, which was succeeded by a comparison in which Stella's poetry was not spared he wanted to enlighten the inexperience of her teacher.

Putting aside all self-love, Tisdal was on the rack. But Swift saw nothing; and as in his character of a poet he was not easily stopped when he was in the vein of reciting verses, he began—of course entirely for the advantage of master and pupil—to confide to Tisdal those which he had just made in reply to Mrs. Vanhomrigh's.

He could write verses in reply to hers.

Tisdal was not enough of a critic to occupy himself as much as Swift did with the style; and all the merit of Mrs. Vanhomrigh's versification did not divert his attention from the thoughts expressed. He knew by experience that in this figurative language, and under the pretext of fiction, love takes many liberties; and after making due excuse for poetic hyperbole, he thought he observed sundry passages which far outstretched the limits of simple friendship. By experience, likewise, he knew that poets find it hard to refrain from confidential communications; and the first time he was alone at Marley Abbey, he requested the mistress of the house to initiate him into the secrets of her portfolio.

Mrs. Vanhomrigh began discreetly, but as she warmed by recitation and by applause, she allowed herself to be carried away; and he came away convinced that he had no merit of invention in making poetry serve as interpreter to love.

This, then, was what Mrs. Johnson and he had gained at the expense of so much labour! They had drawn the Dean and Mrs. Vanhomrigh closer together than ever!

This painful reflection suggested several others to Tisdal. He remarked, somewhat late, that a community of intellectual pursuits was not the sole cause of Swift's preference for Vanessa: the sympathy between their cha-

racters are quite as strong. Moreover, Mrs. Vanhomrigh had lived in London at the time when Swift was the right hand of the ministers, the oracle and the terror of society. She was to him a living memorial of the most brilliant year of his existence; her conversation carried him back to this much-regretted time, and administered by turns every kind of gratification to his vanity.

Mrs. Johnson, on the contrary, had been the cause of his giving up this life; and people are often made to bear the blame of sacrifices that have been voluntarily made for them.

Between Vanessa, who recalled to him London, Windsor, the Court, all the intoxication of fame and of favour, and Stella, who represented Ireland—that is to say, an eternal exile, a narrow field for exertion, a dull monotonous life, and, by way of excitement, some calumnious gossip, or a quarrel with his Archbishop—between Vanessa and Stella there could be no doubt on whom the choice would fall.

Tisdal lost all heart altogether.

Poor Stella, who was full of illusions, how was he to tell her that he had been mistaken—that he had led her upon a false track? How could he strike her so heavy a blow? And yet he could not let her perish by slow torture! A prey to emulation, she studied by night in secret; she was working herself into a fever; ruining her eye-sight, and breaking her health. How heart-rending to know that she was wearing herself out in pursuit of an impossible result! Night after night he watched in the street under her window, unable to take his eyes off the light that shone upon her studies, anxiously waiting until it was extinguished and Stella gone to rest. Oh, how he repented of having lured her on to hope, and of having shut her eyes to Swift's neglect! What a responsibility—what remorse! Delay could but aggravate his fault and her danger; he must undeceive her, and that instantly. He longed to fall at her feet, to ask her pardon, and to exclaim: "He does not love you! He will never love you: he loves another!"

But should she believe it? She knew he was in love with her, and would receive his testimony with suspicion.

Weak as every one is with those they love, she would not be able to dissemble in order to ascertain the fact, and he would simply incur the odium of such a step. He had better keep in the background, and let the facts speak for themselves. It would be sufficient were the two enemies to meet ; their jealousy would do the rest.

He found it easy enough to rekindle the desire for this meeting in the heart of Esther Johnson, but he soon perceived that it was not upon her that he should have worked ; she stood too much in awe of Presto. Mrs. Vanhomrigh had greater influence and less timidity. Tisdal began a fresh course of visits at the Abbey.

On perceiving Tisdal's increased assiduity it became Swift's turn to make conjectures. He thought that Tisdal, afraid of having betrayed his amorous projects, was now at the eleventh hour trying to hide his game.

"What uncommon penetration and sagacity," thought Swift. "Does he think that the last two years have produced no change ? Can't he see that I have left the coast clear for him ?"

Luckily, Swift was in a good humour ; in order to assist Tisdal's slow understanding, he paid greater court than ever to Vanessa ; but Tisdal was insensible to the hint, and was for ever at the Abbey.

"Does he think himself such particularly good company, I wonder ?" said Swift to himself ; "is he bestowing his society upon me in the hope of bribing me to consent to his marriage with Stella ?"

He endeavoured to lead Tisdal to the subject, but in vain.

"What the devil does he want then ? Perhaps he has made Stella refuse him again. I should not wonder at it, he hits upon such extraordinary ways of pleasing her ! The idea of overwhelming her with study, she who is idleness and frivolity in person ! Any one but Tisdal would have perceived that he was identifying himself with a tiresome pursuit, and that he could not have hit upon a surer method of making himself disliked. What a fool ! It is quite clear, however, that he does not come *here in order to amuse us, but to divert himself—or else—who knows, perhaps he wants to make Stella jealous,*

and he is going to make love to the Abbess (this was one of the many pet names by which he called Vanessa). What a rake ! he must have been reading some wicked novel."

But Swift took the affair more seriously, when he found the same ardent wish to meet had revived in the two Esthers at the same time. It was manifest that Tisdal must have been the instigator in either instance. He lost no opportunity of calling the attention of the one to the frequent absences of her guardian, and he had repeated to her the poetical confidences of the incautious Vanessa ; while to the latter he represented her friend's mysterious ward in the most glowing colours. He evidently looked upon Swift as his rival, and tried to convict him of falsehood, in order to profit by Stella's resentment.

" Beyond a doubt, he is turned rake ; the town has corrupted him. Who would have thought it ? However, he really is very dangerous : by working upon the vanity of that child, he is very likely to fill her head again with those foolish ideas which cost me so much trouble to drive out."

Swift felt the necessity of being more guarded in his conduct, but it was not without much ill will towards him who forced it upon him ; and this very reserve had its inconveniences. The reasons he was able to give were too vague to be plausible ; and as fast as he extinguished the fire of jealousy on one side, he re-kindled it on the other with increased fury. Every sacrifice that he forced Vanessa to make to appearances had to be compensated by a host of secret concessions, and these concessions at once became rights, and gave encouragement to fresh demands.

Swift would gladly have kicked Tisdal out of the house ; but this would but have served to confirm the suspicions which he wanted to destroy. He, therefore, contented himself with turning him into ridicule, and taking the affair *ab ovo* ; he gave Vanessa a grotesque account of the Canon's passion. He represented him, at the beginning, timid and absurdly awkward—so timid as to be ashamed of his love, concealing it from himself, as if it were a crime ; and sighing softly—so softly—that neither the person chiefly interested, nor any one about her, could hear

him. His passion suddenly bursts forth, breaks all bounds, betrays itself? By an abduction? no. By an avowal! no. By a long illness that puts the learning and the skill of the faculty at fault? not a bit. How then? Simply by a step worthy of an attorney. Usually, before a man marries, he pays his addresses to his bride elect. But, at Laracor, the bride's consent is not asked; the negotiation is carried on right royally with parents and guardians. Unluckily, the bride elect is English, and does not understand the customs of the country; the proceeding disgusts her. She refuses; the hero disappears. End of part the first.

The hero has not drowned himself; he has made his way in the world, and, instead of a poor Curate, he is now a Canon of St. Patrick's, and in this respect he is more agreeable to the guardian: he is more in love than ever, and sighs a little less softly: in this respect he is more agreeable to the ward. But the drama must not end too soon. The hero knows what is his duty as a hero. A country Curate may be allowed to lack adroitness, but the Canon of a Cathedral—on no account! So he sets to work to rack his brain and to weary his body in contriving and executing stratagems, teasing the one with visits, and wearying the other with lessons, always present and always in the way, and all in order to conceal from this terrible guardian a love affair, as clear though not so warm as noon day, and to wring from him a consent, which he would be only too happy to give.

This explanation had tranquillised as well as amused Vanessa; but Tisdal destroyed the whole effect by one word. For, when she offered him her assistance in bringing about a catastrophe which she hoped would turn to her own advantage, he positively declared that he had given up all idea of marrying Mrs. Johnson. This decisive answer gave the lie to the Dean's version of the story, and renewed all Vanessa's suspicions with so much violence, that henceforth she concealed them, and expressed no further wish to make the acquaintance of the ladies of St. Mary's.

A few days after, Swift met her in the street in Dublin. She told him she had come to make some purchases,

but he had seen her the day before, when she had expressed no such intentions. Another time she announced in a careless way that she was going to take a lodging in town. Swift asked her what for; she replied that the business connected with her coming into her property was not yet settled, and that at the Abbey she was too far off to attend to it.

Swift was not deceived by this pretext. He saw that she wanted to watch Stella and himself, and he opposed her scheme. He was the victor in all his struggles to repress Vanessa's rashness. But a man tires of everything, even of constant victory. Swift was convinced that, whatever might be his motive, it was Tisdal who put these fancies into Vanessa's head. He accordingly insisted upon her ceasing to invite him to the Abbey, and he himself set her the example. But Tisdal no longer waited for an invitation; he came of his own accord, with or without Swift, who lost all patience.

"That fellow is more troublesome than a gadfly: he will not be satisfied till I have crushed him. It seems, forsooth, that I am not free to do what I please. Does he mean to set up for my guardian? Egad! I am a fool to take any notice of him. He wants to see what I'm about, does he? very well, so let him."

From this time forward, when Tisdal was at the Abbey, it was just as if he did not exist. Swift never addressed a single word to him, not even how do you do, or goodbye. He was not a man, he was not even a dog: he was a piece of furniture, and one that was in the way. One might knock against it, or walk round it, and some fine day it is sent out of the room as too inconvenient.

The comparison is not quite exact, for they would not have been so much at ease in Tisdal's absence. If he might be compared to a piece of furniture, it should have been rather to a snug arm-chair, or to one of those couches which bring people close together and dispose them to confidences. Vanessa owed the same obligation to Tisdal that the despised husband in the fable owed to the robber; and, though Swift only returned her love with friendship, it was a great relief to her to be no longer condemned to *silence*—to be able to sigh unchecked—to pour forth the

fulness of her heart in passionate letters, and to get herself first lectured and then pitied.

There was in the park one spot that she loved. This was a thick and secluded bower, through which had been cut an opening commanding a view of the green waters of the Liffey, and which was enlivened by the sound of a distant waterfall. This bower still exists; and though no longer so mysterious or so shady, it still at least bears the name of Vanessa. She had sent hither a table and two rustic seats, and she called it her study; but it was in truth a temple consecrated to her lover. Every time she received him there, she secretly planted a laurel as a memorial of his visit; and when he was absent, it was in this bower that, under the pretence of reading, she passed hours in waiting for his coming, with a book forgotten in her hand, dreamily listening to a murmur of the cascade.

Though ignorant of its romantic destination, and spite of the specious name of study, Swift had been chary of his visits to this sequestered and melancholy spot, and had always taken Mary with him, to show her, as he said, the example, and give her the taste for study. But since Tisdal had begun his series of importunate visits, Mary had become an intolerable child, whose presence made serious reading impossible. She was formally forbidden to enter the bower; and in order to escape from her noise and racket, they took refuge there, even when not bent upon study.

Mary, like all little girls brought into society too soon, was jealous of the attentions paid to her elder sister, and not a day passed that she did not sulk at Swift, and often pinch him black and blue. Excluded from their secret conferences, and left continually alone with Tisdal, she made him the confidant of her jealousies, and acted as a subordinate spy under him.

When the bower was empty, Mary, in order to do like her elder sister, and to taste forbidden fruit, went there, dragging Tisdal with her, and each time he observed that some fresh laurels had been planted. Mary was an excellent spy. Through her, Tisdal soon learnt the whole *mystery*, on condition, however, that he should not mention it; *Hessey* would be so angry if the Dean got wind of it.

Tisdal promised to keep the secret religiously; and a few days afterwards he surprised the Dean and Vanessa, occupied in cultivating their laurels together.

The discovery was significant; through the same channel he made another still more important—Swift had not thought it right to let himself be adored like an idol. In his turn he had raised a temple to Vanessa—he had immortalised in verse the love with which he had inspired her.

Thus laurels had been exchanged between them. In this poem, entitled Cadenus and Vanessa (Cadenus being the anagram of Decanus, dean), the heroine's passion was described and dwelt upon with evident satisfaction; and the author's curious minuteness in this respect, in great measure supplied the want of information as to the feelings of the hero.

Tisdal endured all the impertinence and disdain heaped upon him, with the most Christian patience. He was less resigned to the slights that did not affect him personally; and the sight of his attentions and endearments, which Swift openly bestowed upon Mrs. Vanhomrigh, made his heart bleed for Stella. But he strove to harden himself to it: necessity kept up his courage and rendered him insensible from sheer humanity, like a surgeon preparing himself to perform a dangerous operation.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE waterfall which was heard from Vanessa's bower is well known in Ireland under the name of the Salmon Leap. It has honourable mention in all guide books, and is consequently much visited by strangers. It is to the inhabitants of Dublin what Richmond is to Londoners, or Montmorency to Parisians—a resort for parties of pleasure. Although Esther Vanhomrigh had been now settled in the neighbourhood for above a twelvemonth, she had not yet been there. First her sorrows, and afterwards the hopes and fears inspired by love, had given *sufficient occupation* to her mind, and Swift had taken

good care not to seek for amusement abroad for her. Ever since that evening when, while riding together, they had met Tisdal, Swift had avoided appearing in public with her; and even in the height of his irritation against the young Canon for setting himself as a spy upon his actions, his bravadoes had never been carried beyond the precincts of Marley Abbey.

For those who wished to avoid publicity, no walk could be more ill-chosen than that to the Salmon Leap, not only on account of the crowds it attracted, but from the lay of the ground itself. There was but one road to it, along which it was unavoidable to run the gauntlet of all the pleasure-seekers.

But during the many hours which Tisdal and Mary were left to spend alone together, it was necessary to talk about something; so Tisdal described to Mary all the sights of the neighbourhood, and among the rest he did not forget the Salmon Leap, the roar of which mingled with their talk. Either from national vanity, or in order to amuse the poor child, who had not the same resources at home as her elder sister, Tisdal gave her such a fairy-like description of this waterfall, of the silvery salmon darting down the stream, or leaping straight up the cascade, of the green and flowery woods which overshadowed it, of the delightful road which led to it, between the winding and verdant Liffey on one side, and a hill scarlet with wild strawberries on the other, that Mary was burning with desire to behold all these marvels.

She accordingly teased her sister to go there; and Vanessa, who could not conceive of a party of pleasure without Swift, and who, moreover, wished for nothing more than an opportunity of showing herself with him in public, requested the Dean to escort them thither.

The Dean did not relish the proposal; without positively refusing, he had hitherto evaded it. But his evasive answers had merely piqued Vanessa into persisting in her request. Encouraged by former concessions, she resolved to gain her point; and in order to render her triumph complete, she determined to make Swift take *them to the Salmon Leap* on his birthday. It had long been his custom to spend that day with his ward: this

Vanessa knew from Tisdal, and she resolved thus indirectly to obtain the preference over her rival.

At times lovers, like ministers, are seized with a desire to ascertain the true nature of their position, and to put their credit to the test. The excursion to the Salmon Leap became a cabinet question.

In playing for such stakes, no means of insuring success should be neglected, and Vanessa had taken the precaution of composing, in honour of Swift's birthday, a copy of verses, which she read to him on the preceding evening.

This mark of attention was intended to dispose him favourably; but she had also made her verses press her suit with great ingenuity. The subject was a comparison between Swift and the waterfall, both celebrated, both making a noise in the world, the pride of their country, visited by strangers, admired without being seen, and still more admired after...

She stopped short in the middle of the verse.

"Well," said Swift.—"I have got no further," she replied.

"That's a pity, for you were never in a better vein. I suppose you had not time."

"Far from it. But to describe a thing one must have seen it, and I have in vain asked you to take us to the waterfall."

"And is that why you wished to go there?" said he, delighted to think it was not because she wanted to compromise him. "Very well, I will repair my blunder; it would be a sin not to finish such fine verses."

"When shall we go?" she asked.—"On the first fine day in spring, I promise you."

"In spring! What, four months hence? no, not even four days, but to-morrow. I don't choose to let my inspiration cool."

The morrow was the 30th of November—Swift's birthday. The remembrance of this brought Stella to his thoughts, and he objected that the season was too far advanced for country expeditions.

But, as ill-luck would have it, the day was remarkably fine, and there was every prospect of the same weather.

on the morrow. Mary did not fail to insist upon a fact which could not be denied. But there would be no wild strawberries on the hill; no flowers in the hedges; not even leaves upon the trees; and since he had been compared to the waterfall, he might be allowed to indulge some vanity respecting it, and not to wish to show it under unfavourable circumstances.

At length, under the pretence of teasing Mary, of making himself of importance, and of waiting to be coaxed, he delayed answering, and was seeking a plausible excuse, when Tisdal, whose presence they had as usual forgotten, shook off the torpor beneath which he sheltered himself from rudeness and neglect, interrupted the two sisters, and recommended them not to insist. To-morrow, he said, was the Dean's birthday, and he could not avoid spending it with his friends. With a significant look at Swift, Tisdal dwelt with marked emphasis upon the latter word. The Dean's only answer was a look of indignation; nor did the two sisters receive the remark with a much better grace. Tisdal cut short his visit; and next morning, instead of returning to the Abbey, he went to see Mrs. Johnson. He found her very sad. Presto had been there the evening before to tell her that he could not spend his birthday with her.

"Well," said Tisdal, "though the Dean deserts us, there is no reason why we should not celebrate his birthday."

"The Doctor is right," exclaimed Dingley, who was sauntering up and down the room, terribly at a loss how to get through the day, and longing for amusement, now that there seemed to be no chance of finding any "Let us do something. We had promised ourselves some diversion. Don't let us be like that wicked Presto. Don't let us disappoint ourselves."

"The day is very fine," said Tisdal; "let us hire a carriage, and make an excursion together."

"Where to?" said Stella, languidly, who was sitting on Dingley's arm-chair, and seemed to feel its influence.

"Let us go to the Salmon Leap."—"That's it!" replied Dingley, who was restored to full activity by Esther's listlessness. "It's a charming spot, isn't it, Doctor?"

"And a very pretty road. We go through the Phoenix Park, and then along the banks of the Liffey; then close by Leixlip Castle, whose ancient towers are seen just in front of Marley Abbey."

"In front of Marley Abbey!" said Stella, suddenly shaking off her langour. "Yes; you can see the Abbey from the road."

"Indeed," said Esther, "I don't think we could do better. Let us go, Beck; let us go."

Two hours earlier Swift had taken the identical road they proposed to follow; for Tisdal's hint had produced the anticipated result; and Vanessa had gained a complete victory.

Swift was too much interested in shutting his eyes to the grief he might cause, not to deceive himself as to the effect produced by his absence; too much alive to the pleasure which he gave, to feel any remorse at that which he enjoyed himself. Besides, at the end of November, on a week day, there was no fear, spite of the fineness of the weather, of meeting many people; this excursion, therefore, had all the flavour of forbidden fruit, without its danger.

As to Vanessa, she saw in it not only a gratification of her vanity, in being preferred to her rival, but an encouragement and an opportunity to declare her passion. At the Abbey, Swift seemed always on his guard, and she was restrained by his evident distrust. Love is ingenious in raising scruples, and the facility of abusing a privilege often prevents it from being used. It is often easier to speak on the high road, and under the eye of heaven, than when shut up between four walls, and alone with the loved object. The lovers feel that the responsibility is transferred from themselves to the passers-by, and that whatever can be hidden from their observation is fair game.

Mary, notwithstanding her jealousy of her elder sister, was only just enough in the way to add to Esther's security. It is true there were no flowers or strawberries for her to gather along the road, and she was reduced to pick up the acorns that fell from the oaks, or, as Swift called

it, to glean after the pigs; but she was so impatient to reach the waterfall, where she expected to see a whole procession of salmon ascending and descending, that she was busied more in running races with her spaniel than in acting the part of a spy.

But, spite of so many favourable circumstances, spite too of all she had promised herself, Vanessa had not courage to provoke any explanation: the impression of the past was still too strong. She no longer even felt that an explanation was necessary. There are moments of vague intoxication which no reality can equal—dreams so sweet that no awakening can make up for them—the soul seems to have thrown off its earthly covering, in order the better to taste the exquisite delight of loving. It matters little what is said; it is the sound of the beloved voice alone that falls on the ear like soft and sensual music.

Our two dreamers had already passed a whole hour, standing by the waterfall, gazing at it without seeing it, and talking about it without giving it a thought, when Mary, who took less time to admire, and was now looking down the road, exclaimed in astonishment,

“Why, here is the Doctor!”—“The Doctor!” said Swift.

“Yes, Doctor Tisdal; there he is, with two ladies.”

It was indeed Tisdal, walking between Mrs. Dingley and Mrs. Johnson. Swift turned pale with anger, and seizing Vanessa by the hand, exclaimed:—“Come, come along.”

And he dragged her towards the group that was advancing towards them.

Stella had already espied Swift and the Vanhomrighs: at this sight a smothered cry escaped her, and she clung to Tisdal's arm with a force which he could not have conceived possible.

Tisdal, now the operation was over, watched its effect with deep anxiety: when he felt the convulsive pressure of Stella's hand—when he saw the pallor of death overspread her beloved face—he was seized with alarm and remorse. Great God! what had he done? So violent a *remedy was beyond the strength of the patient!* Of what

imprudence had he been guilty? And the Dean, who was coming towards them, blinded with fury! how could he protect her from the impending blow?

Tisdal rushed to meet Swift, in order to warn him of Stella's condition; but Swift roughly pushed him aside, walked straight up to her, and placing her rival before her, said: "You wished to see Mrs. Vanhomrigh; here she is! now rest contented."

"Yes, yes," said Tisdal, "this is a surprise with which the Dean and I contrived to please you."

"A surprise!" Swift was about to give him the lie direct, but Stella had fallen into a fainting fit. Alarmed, he snatched her from the arms of Tisdal, who caught her as she was falling, and carried her rapidly to the brink of the river. Tisdal had outrun him; and it was not long before they were joined by the ladies. But Swift assisted her with such dexterity and jealous care, that none of the others dared to intrude their services. Tisdal scarce ventured to offer the water he had scooped up in his hat, or Vanessa the salts which she luckily had upon her.

As soon as Stella had recovered her senses, and without giving her time to fix upon any one of all the various conflicting ideas which passed through her mind, Tisdal took advantage of Swift's silence, which arose from humanity, to justify her in spite of him, and to confirm the pious falsehood suggested to him by solicitude for her. For some time, he said, the two Esthers had wished to become acquainted, and, in concert with the Dean, he had planned this meeting. He was sorry that the surprise had turned out so ill, but that was his fault; Mrs. Johnson had such delicate nerves; he ought to have given her notice a few minutes beforehand.

During these explanations Stella looked from Swift to Tisdal, with that air of incredulity which asks only to be convinced. Swift could not withstand the mute entreaties of his darling patient, and he completed Stella's cure by becoming an accomplice to Tisdal's stratagem.

When Stella was better, they all walked towards the carriage, which had remained below the falls, about a quarter of a mile off. On reaching the place, Swift talked of escorting the Vanhomrighs home; but, upon a suppli

cating look from Stella, Tisdal proposed that the four ladies should drive home in the carriage, while Swift and he followed a-foot as far as the Abbey, whence they might resume the two vacant places.

Swift did not venture to oppose this arrangement, but it annoyed him. It was not that he feared to leave the two Esthers together, as they would not be alone. But he had read in Vanessa's eyes, and he saw that she, too, was struggling with anguish. This was a fresh cause of anger against the unlucky Tisdal. At all events, however, he would have an opportunity of taking him to task.

Accordingly the carriage had not started before he seized Tisdal's arm with a grasp of iron, and shouted with a furious voice, careless whether the ladies heard him or not: "Now, Sir, it is our turn! you will be so good as to tell me what all this means?"

"Willingly," said Tisdal, with less embarrassment than Swift had expected.

"But I must know the truth."—"Sir!"

"Sir, you have just now lied, and forced me to be a party to the lie. I have a full right to speak to you in these terms."

"The compulsion under which you acted, Sir, ought to prove to you that there are circumstances which leave no choice, save that between two faults."

"But it was you, and you alone, who brought us into this dilemma."—"Sir, men judge from events, but God judges from intentions."

"Intentions! forsooth! Intentions! Do you suppose that I cannot guess yours in bringing Stella hither? Tortuous as is your conduct, Sir, I am not quite your dupe, and I will prove it to you in three words: you are in love with Mrs. Johnson. You have not succeeded in making her love you—thence you concluded that she loved another—and that other was myself..."—"Yes, Sir."

"Let me finish my sentence! You took it into your head that I was devoted to Mrs. Vanhomrigh, and you determined to let Stella see it."—"Yes Sir."

"So! you confess it. Well, then, you have acted unlike a gentleman."—"No, Sir," answered Tisdal, with a calm and sorrowful smile.

"How, Sir," said Swift, exasperated by his coolness, "how, Sir; you dog me; you lay snares for me, and you call that the conduct of a gentleman!"

"It was for her sake, Sir," said Tisdal, in the most gentle voice.—"Her sake: whose sake?" said Swift, more in anger than in ignorance.

"Mrs. Johnson's, Dean; she loves you."

"I know that you think so," said Swift, shrugging his shoulders.—"I know that it is so."

"Did Dingley tell you?"—"No; it was not Mrs. Dingley."

"Who was it, then?"—"Mrs. Johnson."

"Mrs. Johnson! and to you who love her!"—"To me who love her! to me who pity her; to me who know all the pain of loving without being loved in return!"

Swift remained thoughtful for a moment; then violently putting aside a disagreeable thought: "And you know that pain—you, her confidant, were not afraid to expose that feeble girl to such a trial!"—"I hoped to cure her."

"Or to kill her—come, Sir, when a man cannot make himself loved, he should give it up as a bad job."—"That's what I have done long ago, Sir."

"You! you dare to say this, when, but a few minutes since, in order to work upon her vexation..."

"Say, rather, in order to open her eyes, to let her see that she had failed in making herself loved, and to induce her to give up the attempt. As for myself, I am altogether out of the question. From the moment that Mrs. Johnson confided to me her love for you, I sacrificed mine to her."

"Then, Sir, if you have no personal interest in the matter, by what right do you meddle in my affairs?"

By what right, indeed! Tisdal had bought his right too dearly not to assert it.

"By what right?" he exclaimed, with a vehemence which reduced Swift to silence; "it is clear you don't understand me! By the right earned by the sacrifice of my love. You think me too unselfish it seems. Though I have given up all hope for myself, I have not given it up for her. What consolation am I to have if she is not

happy? Her happiness is necessary to make my life endurable." And he burst into tears.

"You are an excellent fellow!" exclaimed Swift: "but how could any one conceive of such disinterestedness?"

"Would that it had not been forced upon me by a confession on her part which deprived me of all hope—by her ingenuous trust in me—by the need that I felt to devote my life, whether in joy or in sorrow, to her—by the illusions with which her life seemed bound up."

"And yet you could think of robbing her of them!"

"I encouraged them at first; nay more, I shared them. It seemed so easy to love her. I saw her make such efforts to please you! During the whole of this year past, goaded by emulation, or jealousy if you will, but at any rate, in the hope of making herself worthy of you, this frivolous child, whose love you do not believe, has worked under my eyes without ceasing. Nothing was too dry for her, nothing could check her ardour; but the more she worked, the more you neglected her. You have never marked her progress; you give no credit to her zeal: she addressed verses to you, and you only saw their faults—in a word, you do not love her. This was what I wanted to prove to her. I wish to tear this illusion from her heart, for after all I cannot let her die of toil."—"Die!" exclaimed Swift.

"Yes, die!—for so long as she is allowed to remain in her error, she will persist in wearing herself to death by work! You are employed elsewhere, and you don't see what takes place. Not only her days, but her nights are spent in study."

"Her nights!"—"Yes, Dean, her nights! I know something about it, as I cannot think of sleep until I have seen her light extinguished; and for above a year I have never gone to bed till daylight."

"You are an excellent fellow," said Swift, taking him by both hands.

The tears now stood in his eyes, for he was one of those whom admiration causes to weep sooner than any other feeling. Emboldened by this unexpected mark of sensibility, Tisdal thought the moment propitious for a last

■ attempt, and retaining the hand which Swift was about to withdraw.

：“Dear Dean,” said he, in a hesitating voice, “our poor patient...”

：“Well, my good friend,” said Swift, with an affectionate tone.

：“She is calm now, I trust ; she thinks she was mistaken ; and no doubt she at this moment thanks God from the bottom of her heart. But to-morrow—at the first occasion on which her suspicions may be aroused...”

：“Never fear, I have been warned—I will be on my guard—I will spare her feelings.”

：“But your regard for her feelings will only cause those fatal hopes to take deeper root in her heart. How many more nights are we to let her spend over her books ?”

Swift did not answer, but strode along even faster than usual, with his eyes fixed upon the ground.

：“I implore you,” continued Tisdal, “to take some decided course. The cause I plead is not more Mrs. Johnson’s than Mrs. Vanhomrigh’s. These two women love you ; the longer you temporise, the more do you increase their love, their hopes, their jealousy—the danger of an explanation. You can no longer deceive yourself, and you have no time to lose. Make up your mind—take a decided course.”

：“Make up my mind—make up my mind !” cried Swift, angrily. “That, Sir, is my business ; that concerns me.”

This answer put a stop to all further attempts at persuasion on Tisdal’s part. He expressed his disappointment by a deep sigh, and spoke not another word all the way.

The four ladies were waiting for them in the carriage. Mrs. Vanhomrigh invited Mrs. Johnson to stop a little while at Marley Abbey, but the advanced hour, and Stella’s indisposition, gave Swift a pretext for refusing the invitation ; and when the two Vanhomrighs had entered the house, he and Tisdal got into the carriage and drove towards Dublin.

The drive home was very silent. Stella was in that state of prostration which usually follows a nervous at-

tack. Dingley was taking her afternoon's nap. Swift and Tisdal were occupied with thoughts which they were prevented from uttering.

When they reached Stella's door, Swift in his turn refused to go in: it was time the patient should go to bed. Tisdal intended to drive him to the Deanery, especially as it began to rain very hard. But he had not even time to propose it before Swift had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SWIFT wanted to be alone, to have no measures to keep, or remonstrances to listen to, and not to have that fellow Tisdal before his eyes any longer. His pride was hurt by the tone of authority assumed by a man whom he did not consider capable even of governing himself. But the chief cause of his displeasure was that he had given him advice which would be very painful to follow.

Take a decided course, forsooth! Truly, that day's experiment had been vastly encouraging. Take a decided course—this was very easily said: besides, had he not done so when it was reasonable or possible? Had he not been courageous, even to cruelty, with Mrs. Vanhomrigh, and was it his fault if a fatal complication of events had again placed him upon the horns of this eternal dilemma?

But after having begun, as usual, by listening to the suggestions of pride, and giving way to the impetuosity of his character, reason and good feeling, as usual, reasserted their dominion over him. If, while the two Esthers did not know each other even by name, he had felt the danger of temporising between them, how could he shut his eyes to it now that the two rivals lived so near to each other—that they had met, and must infallibly meet again? Their evident jealousy rendered an explosion imminent, and it was not by half-measures that this could be averted. Moreover, in the actual state of things, *some explanation* had become necessary; and where silence *had hitherto* sufficed, he must have recourse to falsehood.

Oh, Tisdal was quite right: he must take some decided course!

But what was that course to be? the same as before, always the same. His duty was not changed. The considerations which formerly determined him were now more powerful than ever. The scene that had occurred in the morning, Tisdal's confidences, and, above all, his example, allowed of no hesitation. Tisdal owed nothing to Stella, and yet he had devoted himself to her; he loved her, and he had sacrificed his very love to her. How could any man think of himself in the presence of such self-abnegation?

"And I, who promised to be a father to her, I, who accepted the responsibility of her happiness, am I incapable of following in Tisdal's footsteps? Has he a stronger will, or greater self-control than I? Oh, heaven is my witness, that if it were only myself whom I must sacrifice, I should not have been the last. But there is poor Vanessa! is not she, too, an orphan? When I broke off my intercourse with her before, I left her under the care of a mother; but now, desolate as she is, can I deprive her of the only friend she has left? Weak, weak heart! would you make the mischief incurable with your eternal hesitation? Because I dare not give one of these deluded women a moment of salutary pain, shall I cause the misery of both? Shall I wait until such time as I myself, having grown weaker and weaker, end by preferring pleasure to duty? No, no: we must part, we must part."

Swift accordingly determined to go the next morning to the Abbey, and there honestly to explain all, and to break with Mrs. Vanhomrigh. Generally when irresolution ceases, tranquillity returns; but this time Swift did not enjoy the usual reward of a wise resolve, and daylight found him still wandering like a ghost in the spacious rooms of the Deanery.

Without waiting for Patrick to rise, Swift saddled Bolingbroke himself, and set out on his solitary ride. In his impatience to acquit himself of a painful duty, he quickly traversed the space that separated him from Marley Abbey, and when he arrived the household still seemed *buried in sleep*. But on entering the avenue, he saw

Vanessa sitting at her window, apparently expecting his visit.

She wore the same clothes as on the previous day, and everything showed that she too had not been in bed that night.

At the sight of this grief, which he came but to increase, Swift felt his resolution waver, but it was only for a moment. It was in his nature to stand up against difficulties, and the feeling of his own sacrifice steeled him against the sorrow he was about to inflict.

Mrs. Vanhomrigh, moreover, lent him arms against herself. At the first sight of Swift she could not repress a gesture of delight; but no sooner was she certain of this ardently desired visit, than jealousy regained the upper hand, and she received him with irony.

"Ah! here you are! The fainting fits are over, then?"

"Esther, I am come to talk reason to you," replied he, with a grave and sorrowful air: "are you in a state to hear me?"

"Reason! reason!" exclaimed she bitterly; "I know the meaning of that word in your mouth. Reason means to stifle every feeling of the heart—to condemn oneself to continual restraint—to incessant acting. But though you have your reasons for liking to be mysterious, I am weary of the part you make me play. Do you hear me? it is time that we should come to a clear understanding."—"I am here with no other intention."

"Oh, of course, you have come to sound me, to find out how much I have surmised, and to regulate your confessions upon my discoveries. But after what passed yesterday, I don't want any half-confidences."—"My confidences shall be complete."

"Complete or not, at all events, they come too late for me to thank you for them."

"I should have made them before, if that could have been of any advantage to you."—"It is always an advantage not to be a dupe."

"The word is too unjust to be offensive; my poor child, you have been the dupe of no one but yourself."

"Too true: I have been duped by myself, by my affection for you, by my trust in your faith and honour."

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He walked towards the door; Mrs. Vanhomrigh, who had been extremely flushed, turned deadly pale. Swift perceived it, and had not courage to leave her. Besides, the operation he had to perform was too painful to be begun over again.

"Unreasonable girl!" said he, approaching her, "will you always do me injustice? What right have you to speak to me thus?"

"What right? can you ask, after what I have seen—after all I have suffered? You have been far too ready to act upon the silence which I forced myself to keep. It may have been convenient, but it cannot have deceived you."

"No, it did not deceive me; and when I accuse you of injustice, it is even more of injustice in my favour than the reverse. You look upon everything through the medium of a diseased imagination. But how have I deceived you? In London, and again at Letcombe, did I not always tell you that no connection could ever exist between us? Was it my fault that your misfortunes brought us together again? Ought you to have taken the forbearance imposed upon me by them, for tacit encouragement?"

"You ought to have foreseen the danger; you who are so prudent and reasonable. Your system of harshness had succeeded so admirably; pity you did not adhere to it."—"What, and let you go to prison?"

"Yes, yes, you should have let me go—you should have let me die there; anything rather than your forbearance which deceived, or your pity which humiliates me! What good has it done me, say? Is not my life more completely destroyed and rendered impossible? In prison, I should at least have retained a few illusions to feed my *diseased imagination*. But now, what is to become of me?"

"I will tell you, Esther; and in so doing I will give up the system of forbearance which has answered so ill, and which you yourself condemn. I would have you return to London, where so many things demand your presence—your *habits*, your duties, your interests, the care of

your sister's education, which is being neglected here; your duty to your kind guardian, who keeps asking for you both, in order that he may leave you his fortune in return for the comfort you will be to his old age. Meanwhile, I will be your steward here; and believe me, my dear child, that the time will come, and that sooner than you think, when we shall meet once more, without danger, and when you will thank me for having been firm, and for having forced you to forsake a life of romance for one of sober reality—for a life of reason and duty, which alone can afford true happiness."

"Why waste so many phrases when a word would be enough?" cried Esther, indignantly. "Say at once that you want to get rid of me."—"Oh, Esther!" replied Swift, in a tone of distress.

"Yes, you want to get rid of me!" she repeated. "Do you think me blind? Do you suppose that I do not see that that woman loves you?"—"And what if she did?"

"She does, I tell you."—"Well, yes, she does."

"Ah! he owns it—he owns it!" cried Esther, wringing her hands, and pacing up and down the room. "This, then, is the fruit of my resignation! this was the motive of all his exactions! He has deceived me—utterly deceived me!"

This cry of anguish and rage plainly showed what fond hopes had been crushed by Swift's avowal in the depths of her jealous heart.

"Listen to me," said Swift, in a voice which drowned Vanessa's exclamations: "a few words of explanation will convince you of your error."

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And, taking her by the arm, he almost forced her to sit upon a sofa, and placed himself by her side.

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Encouraged by Mrs. Vanhomrigh's silence, Swift went on to say : " This, Esther, is the truth—the whole truth. If I did not tell it you sooner, it was, I again assure you, that I did not wish to inflict needless pain upon you ; that I hoped that time would cure both my beloved patients ; that, unless under the pressure of absolute necessity, I did not think I had any right to reveal a secret which was not my own ; and lastly, that after such an explanation, a separation was inevitable. My calculations have been foiled by circumstances. The knot I would have disentangled has been violently severed. Let us part, then ; but I beseech you let us part without anger, without bitterness ; as friends who must submit to a painful necessity ; as friends who one day, and that ere long, will meet again."

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It was her very resistance that had given Swift courage for the struggle. But when once she was subdued, her sullen silence embarrassed and alarmed him. He was afraid that he had gone too far, that he had not sufficiently softened in form a determination of which he *himself* was well able to feel all the harshness, and he resumed in a gentler tone : " You think me very hard,

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He stopped in the hope of an answer of some kind. Receiving none, he continued: "Life is a serious thing—far more serious than it appears at your age, Esther. It abounds with painful duties; one must learn to fulfil them; one must learn to subdue oneself. Do you think that the resolution to inflict this pain upon you cost me nothing?" He stopped again, but with no better success.

"Do you doubt my word, Esther? do you doubt my affection for you? If I advise a separation, do you think it is on selfish grounds: have you such an opinion of me?"

But he addressed a statue—a statue of disdain. He yielded to a burst of painful indignation, and, rising quickly, exclaimed: "My God! I suffer quite enough as it is from this cruel necessity: at any rate, don't misinterpret my intentions! don't calumniate my heart!"

And, in his turn, he walked up and down the room in a state of violent agitation. Mrs. Vanhomrigh gave no sign of life. He suddenly stood still before her; and, maddened by her inflexible silence, he resumed, in a tone most fitted to command attention: "Do you know, Esther, why I give the preference to Mrs. Johnson over yourself? The reasons I have just stated are not the only ones—they are not the true ones. It is not because she is an orphan; because her misfortunes give her a claim to my affectionate care; or because my imprudent attentions have given her a right to my devotion. You, too, are an orphan; you, too, have had misfortunes, and I have no less cause to reproach myself on your account; nor is it because she loves me. Alas! the time for concealment is past; why not confess it? You also love me. Do you know, then, Esther, why I give her the preference? Well, then! it is because I do not love her; and because while my heart suffers, my conscience, at least, is tranquil. Do you know, then, Esther, why I sacrifice you to her? It is because it is you I love!"

On hearing this unexpected confession, Esther raised her head, and looked at Swift with a fixed and astonished gaze, as if she had just waked out of a dream, and sought to collect her ideas. She smiled, but it was a nervous smile: and then bursting into tears, she fell, half-choked, at the Dean's feet.

"He loves me! he loves me!" she murmured in the midst of her sobs.

And when he tried to raise her up, she resisted all his efforts, and embracing his knees with all her force, exclaimed:—"Do with me as you will. I can now bear anything. I am now armed with courage! Yes, yes, I will obey you. Henceforth, I have no will but yours. What if we are parted? I no longer complain, I am beloved! I am beloved!"

Her intoxication was contagious. Swift, who had succeeded in raising her from the ground, pressed her passionately to his heart.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHILE this agitating scene took place between Mrs. Vanhomrigh and Swift, Mary, whom the sound of Bolingbroke's hoofs had awakened, dressed herself in a great hurry, in order to come in for her share of the Dean's early visit. She arrived just in time to interrupt the reconciliation. The giddy girl little thought that her haste would be rewarded with a double malediction, not the less cordial because it was silent.

Nevertheless, one of these maledictions—Vanessa's, namely—was unjust, since Mary's unwelcome arrival undoubtedly favoured her passion; Swift was so jealous of his own self-control that the more rapidly he had been hurried away by his feelings, the more was a reaction to be feared. In his determination to conquer himself, he was not unlikely violently to burst the bonds that enchaind him as soon as he felt them, without stopping to consider whether he did not at the same moment break poor Vanessa's heart. The interruption from without

"Good heavens!" said she, "what must Mrs. Vanhomrigh have thought of me? You will soon take me to see her, won't you, dear Presto? She is a charming person, I hope we shall soon make friends. See, what it is to be jealous; yesterday, I could have wished her dead; and to-day I feel quite fond of her. Poor thing! She has had so many sorrows! and it is such a comfort to be loved!"

She held out her hand to Swift with the most simple confidence. He clasped it cordially, and held it in his for some minutes.

This was not an act of hypocrisy on his part, nor was it done from remorse, or even from regard to her feelings; it was from sheer affection. Swift loved Stella sincerely.

Moreover, she exercised upon him at this moment a kind of seduction which he was unable to resist. She was evidently suffering; she had not recovered from the effects of the agitation she had undergone the day before, though she was the only person who did not perceive it, so happy was she at finding that she had been mistaken with regard to Mrs. Vanhomrigh. Or, perhaps her soul, by a refinement of moral sensuality, rejoiced all the more for the infirmity of her body, as a prisoner who has just obtained his pardon exults most in his newly-won freedom ere he has passed the threshold of his prison.

The contrast between her gaiety and her sickness, the smile upon her pale lips, her ill-timed security, were so touching, that it would have cost Swift an effort not to press fondly and hold clasped in his the hand which Mrs. Johnson held out to him.

He accordingly, without reserve or calculation, responded to her effusions of tenderness with paternal affection, and thus gradually and insensibly got reconciled with himself, when Mrs. Dingley, who on hearing a horse stop at the door had left the parlour from curiosity, came in again with a letter in her hand.

"Is it for me?" asked Stella, with the eagerness always displayed by young girls at the sight of a letter.

"No, dear, it is for Mr. Presto," replied Mrs. Dingley; "*it is from Marley Abbey,*" she added, in a whisper;

while Swift read it ; "it was brought by a messenger on horseback, who went first to the Deanery and was sent on here."

Stella's happiness and security must have been very frail, for these few words rekindled the fire of jealousy in her heart. She watched Swift with an uneasy and curious eye, but without daring to ask any questions. Mrs. Dingley took the task upon herself.

"Well, Dean, what news? Won't you tell us the subject of so pressing a message?"

The question was an embarrassing one. Vanessa, in language which recalled the mutual effusions that had taken place in the morning, entreated the Dean to sup at the Abbey, provided Bolingbroke and his dear master were not loath to make the same journey twice in one day.

Now the Vanhomrighs had been mentioned, and Swift had not alluded to his visit of the morning. He was therefore preparing, as usual, to turn the affair into a jest, and to put the note into his pocket under pretence of teasing Dingley. But Stella's face betrayed such painful anxiety, that he did not venture to have recourse to a subterfuge of this kind, and he merely said, with an air of indifference: "Oh, nothing at all; merely an invitation to supper."

In order to avoid all appearance of mystery, he carelessly threw the letter upon the table at which they were seated, taking care, however, to throw it close beside him, so that the action might not be interpreted into permission to read it.

Unluckily, in all cases in which the satisfaction of her curiosity was concerned, Mrs. Dingley had a long arm and an elastic conscience. Besides, Presto never scrupled to open other folks' letters. She snatched the note, and began to read it aloud, in order, as she said, to judge of the fair lady's style.

But the tone of the note, the details which it contained, Mrs. Vanhomrigh's anxiety to see the Dean again after the morning's visit, which he had so carefully concealed, all this looked so suspicious, that at the end of the few first lines she repented of her indiscretion; and with a

Vanessa sitting at her window, apparently expecting his visit.

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At the sight of this grief, which he came but to increase, Swift felt his resolution waver, but it was only for a moment. It was in his nature to stand up against difficulties, and the feeling of his own sacrifice steeled him against the sorrow he was about to inflict.

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Her intoxication was contagious. Swift, who had succeeded in raising her from the ground, pressed her passionately to his heart.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHILE this agitating scene took place between Mrs. Vanhomrigh and Swift, Mary, whom the sound of Bolingbroke's hoofs had awakened, dressed herself in a great hurry, in order to come in for her share of the Dean's early visit. She arrived just in time to interrupt the reconciliation. The giddy girl little thought that her haste would be rewarded with a double malediction, not the less cordial because it was silent.

Nevertheless, one of these maledictions—Vanessa's, namely—was unjust, since Mary's unwelcome arrival undoubtedly favoured her passion; Swift was so jealous of his own self-control that the more rapidly he had been hurried away by his feelings, the more was a reaction to be feared. In his determination to conquer himself, he was not unlikely violently to burst the bonds that enchaind him as soon as he felt them, without stopping to consider whether he did not at the same moment break poor Vanessa's heart. The interruption from without

forestalled this fatal reaction; and it was to the presence of the child whom she cursed in her heart, that the ungrateful Esther owed Swift's presence at the Abbey during the whole morning.

The hours passed away so unheeded, both by Swift and Vanessa, that they might have been surprised by evening, had not the luckless Mary, whose destiny it was on that day unwittingly to disturb all her sister's happiness, and who, moreover, had nothing to raise her so far above all earthly wants, exclaimed, in a fit of idleness:—"Come Abbess, are we not going to dine at all to-day?" On hearing this ill-timed question, Esther darted a furious glance at Mary, who was safe in her unconsciousness. But her words had told with fatal effect. Swift looked at his watch. "Two o'clock!" cried he, putting it to his ear.

The watch, however, had not stopped, it was really two o'clock, and he had spent five whole hours at the Abbey. He rose in haste, and refusing to share Vanhomrigh's dinner, although he could not fail to be too late for his own, he went down to the stable without even waiting to give time for his horse to be saddled.

Bolingbroke was quite ready to start, seeing that his master, intending to make but a very short visit, had desired that his saddle should not be taken off. The poor beast was, therefore, still fasting, and as far as he was concerned, would have been but too happy to yield to the importunities of the two sisters on his behalf; but Swift was inexorable, he forced him to go home empty as he had come, and almost as fast.

Great as was her regret at Swift's departure, and spite of the anger she felt against her sister, Esther, on further reflection, did not think herself so much to be pitied.

She was loved! really loved! preferred to the rival who had so strongly excited her jealousy! And to make her empire over Swift more manifest, it was at the very moment after he had announced to her they must separate, during his very farewell visit, that she had wrung from his proud heart the avowal of his love! What a triumph *was this!* And what a prospect did it open to her! True,

there were still many obstacles to be overcome. But, after so decisive a victory, how could she doubt the power of her arms, and, indeed, how could she call those obstacles, which were rather the fruits to be gathered from her conquest?

But, while she gave herself up to these intoxicating hopes with all the passion of her ardent nature, the object of them, as he approached Dublin, lost all his, one by one, on his way. The delicious impressions which had caused him so completely to forget the lapse of time, gave way to serious reflections, to self-reproach, to anxiety with regard to the fresh embarrassments in which he had just involved himself: and insensibly Bolingbroke, obedient to the mechanical impulse that guided him, subsided, from a rapid gallop to the slowest walk, while his rider did not even perceive the change of pace.

The fact was, that Swift was about to see Stella! To see her! What would he say to her? Alas! he would make no more resolutions; he had lost all right to do so.

He rode back his horse to the Deanery; he changed his dress; he ordered a dinner, which was not ready, for which he waited with the utmost patience, and did not touch when it came. He discovered all sorts of duties, he invented a thousand pretexts for putting off the moment of this painful interview. But at last, after what had passed on the previous evening, considering the state in which he had left Stella, he could not do otherwise than go to see her. He set out for Stafford Street.

He expected to be received with reproaches for coming so late; indeed, he almost wished for them, in order that they might drown the inward upbraidings by which he was tormented. But far from uttering any reproaches to him, it was to herself that Stella addressed them. She had received Tisdal's pious falsehood with such perfect confidence, that when Presto did not come, she concluded that he was busy. She was anxious to see him, only in order to beg his forgiveness for having behaved so ill the day before. Her conscience could not be easy until she had made a full confession. She had misjudged Presto's heart; while he was preparing a pleasant surprise for her, she had accused him of sacrificing his poor Stella.

tack. Dingley was taking her afternoon's nap. Swift and Tisdal were occupied with thoughts which they were prevented from uttering.

When they reached Stella's door, Swift in his turn refused to go in: it was time the patient should go to bed. Tisdal intended to drive him to the Deanery, especially as it began to rain very hard. But he had not even time to propose it before Swift had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SWIFT wanted to be alone, to have no measures to keep, or remonstrances to listen to, and not to have that fellow Tisdal before his eyes any longer. His pride was hurt by the tone of authority assumed by a man whom he did not consider capable even of governing himself. But the chief cause of his displeasure was that he had given him advice which would be very painful to follow.

Take a decided course, forsooth! Truly, that day's experiment had been vastly encouraging. Take a decided course—this was very easily said: besides, had he not done so when it was reasonable or possible? Had he not been courageous, even to cruelty, with Mrs. Vanhomrigh, and was it his fault if a fatal complication of events had again placed him upon the horns of this eternal dilemma?

But after having begun, as usual, by listening to the suggestions of pride, and giving way to the impetuosity of his character, reason and good feeling, as usual, reasserted their dominion over him. If, while the two Esthers did not know each other even by name, he had felt the danger of temporising between them, how could he shut his eyes to it now that the two rivals lived so near to each other—that they had met, and must infallibly meet again? Their evident jealousy rendered an explosion imminent, and it was not by half-measures that this could be averted. Moreover, in the actual state of things, *some explanation had become necessary; and where silence had hitherto sufficed, he must have recourse to falsehood.*

Oh, Tisdal was quite right: he must take some decided course!

But what was that course to be? the same as before, always the same. His duty was not changed. The considerations which formerly determined him were now more powerful than ever. The scene that had occurred in the morning, Tisdal's confidences, and, above all, his example, allowed of no hesitation. Tisdal owed nothing to Stella, and yet he had devoted himself to her; he loved her, and he had sacrificed his very love to her. How could any man think of himself in the presence of such self-abnegation?

"And I, who promised to be a father to her, I, who accepted the responsibility of her happiness, am I incapable of following in Tisdal's footsteps? Has he a stronger will, or greater self-control than I? Oh, heaven is my witness, that if it were only myself whom I must sacrifice, I should not have been the last. But there is poor Vanessa! is not she, too, an orphan? When I broke off my intercourse with her before, I left her under the care of a mother; but now, desolate as she is, can I deprive her of the only friend she has left? Weak, weak heart! would you make the mischief incurable with your eternal hesitation? Because I dare not give one of these deluded women a moment of salutary pain, shall I cause the misery of both? Shall I wait until such time as I myself, having grown weaker and weaker, end by preferring pleasure to duty? No, no: we must part, we must part."

Swift accordingly determined to go the next morning to the Abbey, and there honestly to explain all, and to break with Mrs. Vanhomrigh. Generally when irresolution ceases, tranquillity returns; but this time Swift did not enjoy the usual reward of a wise resolve, and daylight found him still wandering like a ghost in the spacious rooms of the Deanery.

Without waiting for Patrick to rise, Swift saddled Bolingbroke himself, and set out on his solitary ride. In his impatience to acquit himself of a painful duty, he quickly traversed the space that separated him from Marley Abbey, and when he arrived the household still seemed buried in sleep. But on entering the avenue, he saw

reserve which looked still more suspicious, she dropped her voice in the middle of the sentence, and finished reading the letter in silence.

Embarrassed by what she had done, she reached the letter to Swift without daring to look at him ; but Stella, with a vivacity very uncommon to her, snatched it from her hand before Swift could take it.

Swift could have throttled Dingley.

Once in possession of her rival's letter, Stella read it with too much eagerness and emotion to understand half its contents, but what she did understand was quite enough ; the letter fell from her trembling hand, and dropped upon the ground.

No one felt inclined to pick it up, and for a long time they all three sat in gloomy silence.

At length, to their great relief, the parlour door opened. Mrs. Vanhomrigh's servant wished to know whether there was any answer to the note which he had brought for the Dean.

" Say that I cannot go," replied Swift, in a dry tone ; " say that I shall sup here."

On hearing these words, Mrs. Dingley darted at Esther a glance of intelligence and triumph. But the wound that had been opened afresh in her jealous heart was too deep to be cured by a mere palliative. Swift was not deceived ; and with all the good-will in the world, Dingley's efforts to atone for her error were unable to restore gaiety to the party during the evening, which dragged on wearily until the hour when Swift could decently take leave.

CHAPTER XXX.

If Stella had not been satisfied with Swift's answer to the message from Marley Abbey, what then must have been Vanessa's displeasure on receiving it ?

Servants do not always espouse their master's friendships, but they are usually ready enough to embrace their hatreds. Mrs. Dingley's cook had not failed to discover

the rivalry existing between the two Esthers; she accordingly took good care that Swift's answer should lose none of its asperity in passing through her mouth; Mrs. Vanhomrigh's man, in his turn, took no pains to soften a message which he did not think by any means worth the fatigue to the horse, and the trouble it had cost him in going from door to door.

Vanessa, who did not expect a refusal—above all a refusal couched in such mortifying language—Vanessa, humiliated before her servants, and still worse before her rival, felt the blow most deeply; and, in her first burst of anger, she wrote to the Dean, breaking with him altogether; but in the act of sealing it she changed her mind.

She reflected that since the interview of the morning nothing had passed between Swift and herself. He could not have changed so suddenly. The servants must have delivered the message wrong. Servants were an envious, malignant class, who sought to sow discord in order to gain power. He was sure to come the next day, and explain all.

These thoughts gave her a tranquil night; but on the next day the morning passed and no Swift appeared, nor did he send any message. Poor little Mary got many a scolding during the course of the morning.

However, he might have been detained by business and not have let her know it, in order to surprise her at supper; but supper was served, and the only surprise was his absence.

Her sleep was not as calm as it had been the night before.

Manifestly this was an affront, which her rival had caused to be put upon her! With all his pretensions to force of character, the Dean was weakness itself; he was proud, and pride gave him momentary energy; but he was utterly unable to withstand a silent and continued influence.

He was the victim of a couple of designing women who worked upon his generosity. He must be released from this thralldom, set free spite of himself. He was the dupe of that girl's whining. It would be vain to attempt

to open his eyes! the two women were the persons to be attacked; they must somehow be sickened of their scheme of catching the Dean.

The question was how this could be done.

Vanessa showed little of the character of her sex in asking herself any such question: to cloak her vexation beneath a courteous manner, to make a friendship with her enemies, insinuate herself to their confidence, and take advantage of her position in order to ruin them in the estimation of their common friend with the most innocent manner in the world, such would have been the truly feminine course of proceeding. But Vanessa was of a sanguine temperament, ardent and impetuous in conduct and in feeling.

In this respect she was very like the Dean, whose faults she could see so clearly. In the arena of life they both fought like bulls with headlong impetus, and indeed they had more than once encountered one another in a battle.

To be beloved by Swift! to be able to marry him! and to be prevented by a chit, who, though well aware that she could not be his wife, nevertheless persisted in forcing herself upon him, and refusing a most worthy young man, who was good enough to be in love with her, and whose offer she ought to be only too happy to accept! Oh! this must be put an end to for the sake of every one concerned.

If Vanessa did not take long to make her resolutions, she was still quicker in executing them. As soon as it was daylight she ordered her horse to be saddled, and rode to Dublin followed by a servant.

This haste was not the result of impetuosity alone. She intended to have an explanation with Mrs. Johnson, and she was anxious to reach her house so early that she should be certain not to find Swift there.

Stella and Mrs. Dingley had just risen and were still in dishabille, when Mrs. Vanhomrigh was announced. "Mrs. Vanhomrigh!"

They made the servant repeat the name, thinking that she must be mistaken. But on being assured that it really was Mrs. Vanhomrigh, that she seemed in great haste, and begged Mrs. Johnson to go down and speak with her *without staying to dress*—Stella merely threw on her *mantua*, and went down-stairs; followed by Mrs. Dingley.

whose intense curiosity caused her to forget to make any alteration in a dishabille that was far from elegant.

They found Mrs. Vanhomrigh waiting in the parlour; she stood with her riding-whip in her hand.

After low curtsies from two ladies, which Mrs. Vanhomrigh scarcely returned, Mrs. Dingley offered seats.

"Don't trouble yourself, Madam, I am not tired. What I want is to be alone with Mrs. Johnson. I have something to say to her in private."

"Mrs. Johnson and myself are one, Madam," replied Mrs. Dingley, bridling.

"That may be, Madam; but you and I are two. When I am gone Mrs. Johnson can repeat our conversation to you, if she pleases; but now you will be kind enough to leave us."

Mrs. Dingley, much disconcerted at being treated so slightly, considered what she ought to do. An affectionate sign from Stella induced her to depart, but not without assuming an air of offended majesty.

When the door was shut behind her, Stella thought herself bound once more to offer Mrs. Vanhomrigh a seat, but the latter persisted in her refusal.

"No, Madam, I thank you, I will not sit down. The purpose of my visit does not accord with all these ceremonies. I have come speak to you about Doctor Swift."

Mrs. Vanhomrigh, dressed in a riding-habit, and with a whip in her hand, spoke with an air perfectly suited to her costume. Mrs. Johnson stood speechless with amazement.

"You are surprised at my proceeding," continued Mrs. Vanhomrigh. "I dare say it is contrary to your habits, but I like plain dealing. I can't carry on a war of little pricks and stabs. I have, accordingly, come to have a full explanation with you—as I told you before, an explanation with respect to Doctor Swift."

Stella, absorbed in her own conjectures, made no attempt to answer. Vanessa went on:

"Let us speak plainly, Madam, without needless disguise. You aspire to his hand: don't deny it. So do I, I tell you so at once; but pretensions are not right. What claims have you to urge? You don't choose to

answer; well, I will tell you mine. It is I whom he loves!"

"Did he tell you so?"—"He did."

Thunderstruck by so positive a declaration, Esther Johnson leaned, or rather sat down, upon the arm of a chair which stood behind her, and tried to look her triumphant rival boldly in the face. But her grief was stronger than her pride; and, bursting into tears, she hid her face in her handkerchief.

Spite of all her prejudices against Mrs. Johnson's *whining*, Mrs. Vanhomrigh was touched. She had been unsparing in the contest; but on hearing the sobs which attested her victory, she approached Stella, and said in a totally different tone of voice, "I have distressed you; perhaps I was too rough; I ought to have prepared you for the communication I was forced to make. I was wrong; but believe me, when you have recovered from your emotion, you will forgive me. Nay more, you will be obliged to me for having enlightened you as to the real nature of your position."

Mrs. Johnson was manifestly too much overcome by her feelings to be capable of listening to reason; Esther Vanhomrigh felt that she must come to her assistance, and fancying that she was giving her salutary advice and consolation, she continued to plead her own cause with the most perfect good faith.

"Hear me: I must appeal to your heart. The Dean has been a father to you,—more than a father; for a man may deserve that name without carrying solicitude, devotion to another, and sacrifice of self, to such lengths as he has done. Perhaps you are not aware that, for your sake, he has exposed his name—his honourable and illustrious name—to calumny! For your sake he has condemned himself to exile; for your sake he has destroyed his prospects; for your sake this great man has balked his genius, for the bent of his genius was towards politics;—but for you he would now be a Bishop, a Peer, a Cabinet Minister; he would be living at Court, in the enjoyment of wealth and honour; instead of vegetating here in *a land of beggars*, he would be governing the State instead of *a Chapter*! This, Madam, is what he has done for

your sake ; I tell you, because it is right that you should know it ; and certainly he will never speak to you of the matter. And now that you are aware of what he has done for you, what will you do for him in return ? All these sacrifices he has made voluntarily, and in silence ; you could accept them without indelicacy. But after what I have just told you, Madam, will you require of him another, compared with which all past sacrifices are as nothing ? You now know the state of his heart ; will you demand from him the sacrifice of his love ? No, you will not, surely ! You are incapable of such selfishness and ingratitude ! ”

In default of words, an ill-suppressed sob from time to time showed Mrs. Vanhomrigh that her arguments were not without effect. This encouraged her to proceed, and after a few moments of silence, she resumed : “ Well, don’t you begin to forgive me already ? Was it not right and needful that you should know the truth ? In coming to you thus, Mrs. Johnson, I have treated you as I would be treated myself : I have given you a proof of esteem. You will deserve it, I am sure ; and if your guardian and benefactor should persist in his custom of immolating himself to you, you will take his part against himself. You will vie with him in generosity. You will repay his disinterestedness in kind. You, too, will display delicacy of feeling, will you not ? You will show proper pride. Believe me, conscience never fails to reward us for obeying its dictates, and yours will give you the strength you need, in order to go through this trial with honour. Perhaps, too, when once you have repaid the services of him to whom you owe so much, your eyes will be opened to the merits of a worthy man, who is deeply devoted to you, and you will find your own happiness in making his.”

Hitherto Stella had remained in the same place, bent nearly double, with her face buried in her handkerchief ; but on hearing the last words of this pitiless exhortation, she uttered a loud shriek, and throwing herself back, fell fainting across the arms of the chair.

Mrs. Vanhomrigh, much frightened, lifted her up directly ; and, after laying her upon the sofa, rushed to the

bell, and pulled it with such vehemence that the rope came down in her hand.

But the bell-rope had not broken without performing its office, and Mrs. Dingley, who, for want of a better gossip, was in high conference with the cook on the subject of this mysterious visit—Mrs. Dingley burst into the room, all terror and alarm, escorted by her confidant.

"Mrs. Johnson has fainted," said Mrs. Vanhomrigh, as she came in: "take care of her. I do not stay with her myself, because my presence would, perhaps, be more hurtful than useful to her. She will most likely repeat our conversation to you," added she, picking up her whip, which had fallen upon the floor: "you had better take a lesson from it, if you really feel as much interest in her as you seem to do."

And leaving Mrs. Dingley aghast at this unexpected sermon, and unable to make any reply for want of knowing to what she alluded, Mrs. Vanhomrigh walked out of the parlour with haughty ease.

CHAPTER XXXI.

STELLA soon revived under the care of Mrs. Dingley and the cook; but she felt so ill that they had to put her to bed.

As soon as she was laid down, Mrs. Dingley sent away the cook, knowing that Esther would say nothing before her. It was not, however, merely from discretion that Esther was silent: she had not strength enough to enter upon the explanation which Mrs. Dingley was so eager to hear; and if from time to time she roused herself from utter prostration, it was merely to sob and moan, and to roll her head upon her pillow.

At last, however, by dint of weeping, her despair subsided, and she was able to answer the numerous questions with which she had hitherto been assailed in vain.

The account of this strange interview quite upset Dingley. She had been prepared for a violent scene of jealousy; but

the formal declaration of so serious a fact completely dismayed her.

Partly, however, from a wish to console her afflicted friend, and partly from natural mistrust, she was not long at a loss for counter arguments. She undertook to convince Stella that Mrs. Vanhomrigh was too deeply interested in the question to be a credible witness; and that her insolent conduct, far from being a sudden impulse or a fit of ungovernable jealousy, might very likely be merely a malicious device for getting rid of a formidable rival.

But all her rhetoric was thrown away: Stella would listen to nothing. Mrs. Vanhomrigh had spoken the truth: he loved her; he had confessed it to her. What could be more likely? Had not Mrs. Vanhomrigh every quality that could captivate a man? Whereas she . . .

Oh! there was but one thing left for her to do, as Mrs. Vanhomrigh had taken good care to tell her—she must withdraw herself out of their way, and go and live or die in some remote corner where they would never again hear of her.

Just as Esther was most vehement in the utterance of these heroic resolutions, to which her tears gave the lie, several loud and authoritative knocks at the street door attracted Mrs. Dingley to the window. It was the Dean.

On hearing this name, the sick girl began to tremble like an aspen leaf. She would not see him! She could not bear to see him!

She begged Mrs. Dingley to say that she was too ill to come down stairs. But she made her promise solemnly not to allude to the cause of her indisposition.

Unfortunately, while she was endeavouring to prevent any indiscretion on the part of Mrs. Dingley, Swift had been let in, and the cook, who had promised nothing, had begun as soon as she had opened the door to tell him all she knew, and perhaps even more, so that when Mrs. Dingley tried to be discreet, Swift—who seldom bestowed upon her the small share of patience he possessed, and who, at that moment, had pretty sufficient reasons for being less patient than usual,—rudely desired her to spare him her ill-timed prudence; and she was obliged to reveal the *secret she had promised to keep.*

As soon as it was manifestly impossible for her to comply with Stella's wishes, Dingley made haste to indulge her own without reserve.

She had not forgiven the very cool manner in which that *Miss* had treated her, and while revenging her friend's wrongs, she was not at all sorry to revenge her own. She, therefore, represented that *Miss's* conduct in the most odious light possible.

It was not to be wondered at if poor Stella was ill—very ill; the thing happened thus, and she described Vanessa's visit as the stratagem of an invading enemy.

Mrs. Vanhomrigh had bounced in upon them like a bomb, at an untimely hour, at an hour at which she was quite sure not to find Presto; Dingley wished to stay in the room, but was desired in the most imperious, she might say, in the most uncivil manner, to leave it. The object was to get rid of all witnesses. In short, nothing that could give effect to the picture, not even the riding-whip, was omitted. And when left alone with Stella, she treated the poor girl with such harshness, with such violence (still with the whip in her hand), that Stella fell senseless to the ground. And when she, Mrs. Dingley, hurried to the spot on hearing the scream which Stella uttered in falling, that woman did not even take the trouble to wait a moment in order to learn if she were alive or dead, but left the room with a threat on her lips, and of course flourishing her whip.

Mrs. Dingley skilfully inserted into her narrative every circumstance that could exasperate the Dean; but her master-stroke was, that she kept suspended over his head the one word which in the state of irritation at which he had already arrived, could not fail to inflame his fury to the utmost. That person had said such things to Stella!—such things! but Dingley took very good care not to say what they were; and she waited to be much pressed before she revealed that that *Miss* had signified that Stella was to take herself out of the way, seeing that the Dean was in love with her, indeed, that he had told her so.

The statement was too true to be forgiven. Swift stuck deep into the table a pair of scissors which he mechanically held in his hand.

This passionate action, which was as good as an answer, did not escape Mrs. Dingley. She put on a grave and maternal air.

"Stella's position," she said, "was no longer endurable. They had on a former occasion yielded to his wishes, and remained with him: he now saw the results. He must now permit them to act according to their own judgment. They could not steal away privately, since such an attempt to spare his feelings had displeased him, but go they would; she thought it right to tell him so beforehand. No other course was possible. They should be only too happy, if it were not already too late. Come what might, Stella was determined not to be told again that she sacrificed her benefactor to herself, and that she was a monster of selfishness and ingratitude. If she was to die, she would rather not stand in the way of anybody's happiness, than expose herself to any more such attacks."

"It shall not happen again," exclaimed Swift. "I will look to it."

"But, with a creature who is so violent, and who says she has rights, how could he be sure?"

"I tell you it shall never happen again!" repeated Swift, in a tremendous voice. "Go and say so to Esther from me." With these words he left the house.

For several minutes after he was gone, Mrs. Dingley continued to tremble with the same sort of nervous terror which the roar of the lion produces on inferior animals. But she soon recovered from her emotion; and in spite of her fifty years, and her habitual lazy indifference, she skipped about the room, and clapped her hands for joy.

Presto was furious! Presto would break with Mrs. Vanhomrigh! She ran up-stairs as fast as possible to tell the good news to her patient; and as she was one of those persons who never leave go of a truth, until by dint of seasoning they have made it into something very like a lie, she did not scruple to add, as the result of the conversation she had just had, that Mrs. Vanhomrigh had told a falsehood; that Presto had never told her he loved her; that he loved nobody but his good little Stella; and that, as a proof of it, he had sent Stella word that he would

deliver her from that intriguing, insolent woman—that virago with her riding-whip.

Mrs. Dingley little knew she was so near the truth. Swift was determined to break definitively with Vanessa—to break this time in the most offensive and efficacious manner, by abstaining from ever seeing her again.

Dingley said even less than Swift really meant to do: and her lies fell short of the truth.

He meditated another still more decisive resolution. Stella had been outraged and was ill; it was not enough to put an end to this quarrel, it was necessary to give Stella a guarantee that it should never occur again—to afford her complete satisfaction and entire security for the future. And as far as he himself was concerned, after what had happened at Marley Abbey, he no longer had a right to count on his own strength: and he wished by an irrevocable step to secure himself against his own heart for the future. He intended to marry Stella. To marry her! and he in love, too, with another.

This was precisely what attracted him most to the scheme. He was dissatisfied with Vanessa and with himself: he was determined not to allow the imperious woman to rule him. He wanted to reconcile himself with his conscience, and, after so many instances of weakness, to give some signal proof of energy.

Immersed in these reflections, he hurried home at his most rapid pace, in order to take refuge in the security of solitude, there to look his position full in the face, and maturely to weigh both sides of the question.

On reaching home, he found Patrick, who had taken good care to profit by his master's absence, and was already in that happy condition in which a man walks in order to hide his staggering, and talks to conceal that he speaks thick. Never had he been so zealous in his master's service, so obstinately officious in his attentions.

"Go to the ale-house this very moment," said Swift, out of all patience: "and mind what I say to you; if you dare to leave it again to-day I'll dismiss you."

Patrick had sometimes asked himself what was the first duty of a servant: he no longer had any doubt that it was obedience.

Swift was thus enabled to spend the whole day without fear of interruption : but, after spending it in deliberation, he still found himself surrounded by so many difficulties, he felt that he should have so much to reproach himself with, whichever course he might take, that he at length perceived the necessity of asking advice.

Ever since the time when he had started to London without leave, and owing also to several rubs which had occurred in the exercise of their respective functions, Swift was on very bad terms with his Archbishop. He now sent to request an interview of him.

He wrote to tell him that he had a case of conscience of the most serious kind to submit to him ; and that he should not apply to him for advice if he knew a more severe, or a more competent judge.

It was late, and the Archbishop, who was just going to bed, sent word that he would receive him very early on the following morning.

The expectation of this conference having given a slight respite to the agitation of his mind, Swift went to Stella's lodging.

She had been much better ever since the flattering intelligence which Dingley had brought her in the morning. But the latter was far too cunning to give the true account of her health, or to let her appear.

Swift spent the night as he had spent the day. So did Patrick.

Next morning the Archbishop's aged physician, who, with the regularity of old age, went every morning at precisely the same hour to breakfast with his patient, found his door locked ; he was told that it had been so since daybreak, and when at length it was opened, there came forth a man so pale and stern, that the old doctor was quite struck by his appearance.

But what was his surprise when, on going in, he found the Archbishop in tears.

"What has happened to your Grace?" cried he.

"Don't ask me," replied the prelate, shaking his head. "All that I can tell you is, that you have just met the most unhappy man on earth."

CHAPTER XXXII.

If admiration can move to tears, the Archbishop had more than one reason for weeping.

Swift, who wished for wholesome advice, given with a thorough knowledge of the case, had made a full confession to him; and the old man, already not too well disposed towards him, began by censuring very severely an ecclesiastic who, entangled in a double love affair at forty years of age, was on the point of destroying, by his presumption, the happiness of one, if not of two young women. But, by degrees, he passed from blame to indulgence, to pity, and at last to esteem; and though, in his heart, he accused Swift twenty times of weakness and irresolution, yet, when it was his turn to come to a decision and to advise in the matter, he had no answer to give but tears.

This, however, was the surest way to resolve Swift's doubts. His very judge dare not pass sentence; his enemy even dare not demand of him a sacrifice: henceforth, his course was clear. That sacrifice, though not required of him, he would make. He loved Vanessa, therefore his choice was fixed.

His decision was perhaps dictated by pride, but by a pride of two aspects, one of which looks towards heaven.

Immediately upon his return home, he wrote a line to Mrs. Dingley, requesting her to come to the Deanery as soon as she could leave her patient for half an hour without inconvenience.

On any other occasion. Mrs. Dingley, whose plan was to exaggerate Esther's illness to the Dean, would have answered that it was impossible to leave her; but this note so worked upon her imagination, that she set off in the utmost haste, scarcely giving herself time to inform Stella of the hopes she had conceived from it.

The good lady was not very moderate in her conjectures, and it was somewhat imprudent of her to expose her young friend to the risk of a dangerous deception. But this time, *more fortunate than discreet*, her expectations were even *exceeded*, for Swift announced to her his determination to

marry Stella. He had promised satisfaction, and he now offered it.

Mrs. Dingley could not believe her ears.

He added only, that as it was necessary to be extremely careful of his own reputation and that of Esther, after all that had passed at Laracor, he was obliged to stipulate that the marriage should be kept secret.

This condition considerably damped Mrs. Dingley's satisfaction at this great news, the more so, as she was less deceived than Swift himself as to its real cause. He evidently wished to spare the feelings of Mrs. Vanhomrigh : it was she whom he in his heart preferred, and he would marry Esther solely from a sense of duty. But Mrs. Dingley was not over nice for herself, and she could not be expected to be so for another. The essential point was, that Stella should suspect nothing, and that the marriage should take place. Time heals every wound, and one day or another Doctor Swift and Mrs. Vanhomrigh would make their minds to endure what could not be cured ; and then Presto would not let himself be deterred by the remembrance of the gossip of Laracor from making his marriage public. Dingley had gained her ends. She had secured the happiness of her friend, and might once more sit down contented in her arm-chair and rest from her labours.

She took little heed of Swift's conditions, and agreed to them on Stella's behalf, with a docility well calculated to satisfy him ; she then hastened to bear this great news to her patient.

Poor Stella ! who could have told her on the day before, when that haughty Amazon came to pierce her heart with her harrowing disclosures, and still more harrowing consolations—who could have told her that she would ever, far less so soon, be so fully avenged, that she would be the chosen bride ?

When the first intoxication of delight was over, the recollection of that painful scene did indeed awaken in her heart some pangs of jealousy, some misgivings that Swift's offer was the result of irritation or of self-sacrifice. Mrs. Vanhomrigh's words still rung in her ears. But Mrs. Dingley presented the matter to her in a more agreeable, if not in a

truer light ; and love, whose arguments are still more persuasive, soon banished all her scruples.

In the evening, a visit from Swift finally converted her to happiness.

It is not sufficient to be able to take a heroic resolution on some one great occasion ; for the first resolve entails a whole crowd of minor resolutions ; and though less striking—perhaps for that very reason, heroism in trifles is often the more difficult of the two.

After the message which he had sent to Stella, Swift could not let the day pass without going to see her. He allowed himself a few hours for reflection, and went to her lodgings at dusk.

Besides, he wanted to witness her happiness, in order to gather from it courage for himself ; and indeed she gave herself up to it with such innocent frankness, that he found the duty he had imposed upon himself less burdensome than he had anticipated. He certainly was less sprightly than usual, and no jests were cracked upon Dingley ; but a certain degree of gravity is perfectly consistent with great satisfaction at an event which is to decide the whole future. Stella's gaiety, too, had something of this character.

Swift was very affectionate ; he inquired with the minutest care into all the details of Esther's indisposition. But the conversation was extremely guarded ; the word "marriage" was not once uttered ; he merely announced that his intention had been to have *everything* ready for late next night, but he feared that Stella might not be well enough to bear the fatigue.

Esther, who did not utter a single word without first endeavouring to read in Swift's face whether it was the one he expected, looked at him without daring to speak. But Dingley, who guessed what was passing in her mind, hastened, in her medical capacity, to give the convalescent a certificate of health, which the lustre of her large black eyes fully confirmed.

It was accordingly settled that *everything* should be done on the following evening. Swift did not mention the condition of secrecy to Stella ; but when Dingley conducted *him to the door*, he asked her whether it was fully under-

stood and accepted? and on receiving an answer in the affirmative, he withdrew.

As he was about clearing scores with his conscience, he went to see Tisdal.

Since their meeting at the Salmon Leap, Tisdal had abstained from all interference in so serious a matter, and Swift was grateful to him for his discretion. He knew that the Canon was in love with Stella, and how generously he had renounced his love; and he wished to inform him of the step he had thought it right to take. Certainly, Tisdal had every possible right to have this cruel secret confided to him.

Spite, however, of his systematic energy, Swift would not have had the courage to announce to so tender a lover that he was going to marry his mistress, had not this marriage been a sacrifice no less painful to himself.

Occupied more with the grief he might cause than with that which he felt, Swift turned over in his mind as he went the precautions which would be needed in order to approach so delicate a subject. But once in Tisdal's presence, he forgot all that he prepared to say; and, after affectionately taking him by the hand, Swift found no other words than:—"Well, my friend, you will be satisfied with me at last."

"Satisfied!" the noble heart guessed his meaning at once, and Tisdal was on the point of exclaiming:—"You are going to marry her!"

But he was restrained by a feeling of discretion and contented himself with shaking Swift heartily by the hand which he still held.

They remained silent for some time; Swift was the first to speak.—"*It will be secret,*" said he.

There were words which it was impossible for either of them to pronounce. But they perfectly understood each other without.

"Secret?" said Tisdal.—And he looked anxiously at Swift.—"On account of what was said at Laracor. She understands why."

Tisdal had forgotten Laracor: he was thinking only of Mrs. Vanhomrigh.

This reason satisfied him as far as Mrs. Johnson was concerned, and he heaved a faint sigh.

It was the first, and it was a sigh of relief.

They relapsed into silence. This time Tisdal was the first to break it.

"And when is it to be?" asked Tisdal.—"To-morrow, at night, if possible."

"Who will officiate?"—"The Archbishop, I hope. He is in the secret."

"And the witnesses?"—"I do not yet know. Being anxious not to make it known..."

"Can I be of any use?" said Tisdal.

And he offered himself as if to perform the most common-place service.

"You?" said Swift, looking at him.—"Yes." And, turning away his head, he hastily left the room.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

It was late before Swift returned to the Deanery ; but he was in haste to terminate the affair. He wrote to the Archbishop, announcing his resolution, and requesting him to perform the ceremony. He did not address him, he said, as Archbishop, but as a man of honour and feeling, to whom he had confided his secret ; and he besought him, by granting his request, to spare him the annoyance of taking another person into his confidence.

Although the message could not be delivered that evening, the answer arrived early next morning, and was all that could be desired.

The Archbishop, without assuming a right to approve a resolution, of which the Dean's conscience must be the sole judge, could not but applaud his courage and the feeling of duty that had dictated the step. He not only accepted the offer made to him, but he would have been hurt, had the Dean selected any one else to bless a union upon which, he might rest assured, no one could more fervently than himself implore the blessing of Heaven.

On receipt of this letter, Swift sent to the Archbishop's *Palace*, to thank his Grace and to arrange with him the *details of the ceremony*. It was settled that it should take

place that very evening at midnight, in a pavilion at the end of the Dean's garden, and that the Archbishop should bring with him a clerk, who might serve as the other witness, so as to avoid letting any one else into the secret.

As soon as these preliminaries were settled, Swift went to announce them to Tisdal; but not finding him, he proceeded to Stella's lodging.

Tisdal was there before him. Who had a better right than he to congratulate the bride? Moreover, he wanted to see her before the ceremony, in order to prepare himself for the difficult task he had to perform. When Swift had told them the result of his visit to the Archbishop, they took counsel together upon the means of avoiding suspicion. The two ladies had accepted, several days before, an invitation to supper in the neighbourhood. Swift advised them not to send an excuse as they proposed. At the end of the evening, instead of returning home, they were to go incognito to the Deanery, and Swift would let them in at the little gate at the end of the garden.

Tisdal obviated the only difficulty that presented itself by offering to escort them. He knew the person at whose house they were to sup, and he promised to call for them at night.

Accordingly, everything took place as had been arranged; and the watchman was calling twelve as the ladies of St. Mary's started on their way to the Deanery, under Tisdal's escort.

It was freezing and the streets were dry. They took advantage of this to go discreetly on foot.

This furtive walk was very unlike the triumphal procession which Mrs. Dingley had formerly pictured to herself for her young friend's wedding. But it was a victory, though without a triumph. And at any rate it was something mysterious and romantic, in short, an adventure. Now Dingley loved an adventure, and had no chance of having any herself, of this nature at least.

As far as Esther was concerned, Swift had willed it so: and except when her jealousy was roused, she could have no other will than that of Swift.

It was a night most favourable to concealment, a night without moon or stars. The two ladies had purposely pro-

longed their visit, in order to be more sure of not meeting any one, and accordingly when they started the whole town seemed buried in sleep, and the monotonous voice of the watchman was the only sound that broke the silence of the streets.

When they left the house, however, Esther thought that she saw on the other side of the street a man standing motionless and apparently on the watch. Although the necessity for concealment naturally disposes every one to suspicion, a circumstance so slight as that of a man standing at the corner of the street would hardly have been sufficient to cause her any uneasiness. But some hours earlier, when coming out of their house in Stafford Street, she had likewise observed a man who seemed to be mounting guard before their lodging. But for this second occurrence she would have attached no importance to the first, this time, however, she could not refrain from remarking it to Mrs. Dingley.

"What a fancy!" said Mrs. Dingley, determined to deny the possibility of danger, in order to keep herself from getting frightened.

And apparently she was justified by the event, for they continued their solitary walk in peace. However, when they had reached their destination, the same human figure re-appeared at a distance, while Tisdal was opening the little garden gate.

Supposing it to be a spy, it would have been more prudent to walk on further, and try to mislead him. But fear is unreasoning, and Mrs. Dingley, who began to feel terribly frightened, could only hurry the Canon to let them in and to shut the door behind them as quickly as possible.

This was like a child hiding its head under the bed-clothes. But once within the wall, her courage returned; and the sight of the Dean having completely restored her presence of mind, she exhorted Esther, in a low voice, not to mention the mysterious apparition, which, owing to her silence and to more serious causes of emotion, was soon entirely forgotten.

Besides there is so strange an affinity between fear and cold, as the symptoms common to both sufficiently prove,

that a good fire often cures both at once. The blazing logs on the hearth of the pavilion into which Swift conducted them dispelled the phantoms conjured up by the darkness of night, and called up a fresh train of thought in their minds.

The room they were in was a sort of summer saloon, where nothing indicated the ceremony about to be performed. But Stella could not enter it without a certain religious awe; in her eyes the saloon was a chapel, and the table, with its green baize cover and wax candles an altar.

As for Mrs. Dingley, she was struck merely with the comfortable air of the pavilion. It must be a delightful abode in the summer, when the leaves were on the trees and the flowers in bloom: and then how pleasant it would be to have a little private entrance, so as to go in and out without disturbing any one! Decidedly, the marriage could not remain secret for more than three months. Presto would be the first to wish his wife to live with him, and in that case Dingley assigned to herself the pavilion as a wedding gift.

Tisdal was in the garden, waiting for the Archbishop, and as soon as Swift had installed the ladies, he joined him there. The cathedral clock struck half-past twelve.

"Not yet come!" cried he, finding Tisdal alone. "No, not yet."

"This is unheard-of conduct," resumed Swift, stamping.

And he began to pace rapidly up and down before the door.

His impatience was perfectly intelligible. He must be anxious to place between himself and the image of Mrs. Vanhomrigh the obstacle of an irrevocable act, the adamant wall of necessity.

"Nothing but the age and infirmity of our good Archbishop," said Tisdal, "could render it excusable in him to keep others waiting under such circumstances."—"You are quite right: it's so cold."

He was always the same!—Tisdal made no answer, and they walked up and down together without speaking, until two gentle taps at the garden gate announced the arrival of the Archbishop.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Dean, that 'I'm late,'" said the Archbishop. "Pray conduct me at once to the ladies, that I may ask their pardon. I hope they will forgive me. These nocturnal expeditions are not much suited to my age."

The pardon had been granted before it was asked. Mrs. Dingley had taken advantage of the time to repair the disorder of her own dress, and to impart a bridal appearance to that of her young friend.

This was no easy task; for, to the great disappointment of Mrs. Dingley, Swift had desired that Stella should remain as she was, in her grey silk gown. But she was sufficiently adorned by the modest looks and downcast eyes which are more becoming than all the bridal wreaths and laces in the world.

She looked charming thus.—Poor Tisdal! The Archbishop could not refrain from stealing a look at him.

He was watching Mrs. Johnson with deep interest, but with perfect calmness. The Archbishop proposed to begin the ceremony.

The form of asking whether there be any one that knows "any just cause or impediment why the marriage should not take place," filled all present with a sort of terror. They felt as if Mrs. Vanhomrigh would come into the room and raise her voice to protest against the marriage; and it was not until after a much longer interval than usual between this question and that which follows it, that the Archbishop, still visibly agitated, was able to address to Swift the hallowed question: "Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour and keep her in sickness and in health; and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her so long as ye both shall live?"—"I will," answered Swift, in a firm voice.

The Archbishop recovered his composure, and turning towards the bride, he said:

"Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of *matrimony*? Wilt thou obey him and serve him, love, honour and keep him in sickness and in health; and for-

saking all other, keep thee only unto him so long as ye both shall live?"—"I will," said Esther, in a timid but heartfelt tone.

The Archbishop went on: "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?"

All present looked at one another—who was to act as father to the bride? In the general hurry no one had thought about it.

Stella turned pale. Tisdal stepped forth from the second row whither he had withdrawn, and taking her by the hand led her up to the Archbishop.

Great Heaven, was he the man to do it!...

This thought passed like an electric shock through every heart, vividly recalling the sufferings which had been the price of Tisdal's heroic love.

For a moment, the chief actors in this affecting scene were effaced by one of the accessories.

Esther felt as if she must go on her knees before Tisdal, and ask him to pardon her selfishness.

Swift's enthusiasm for such a degree of self-abnegation, made him for a moment forget the pain and the magnitude of the sacrifice he was making himself.

There was no one, not even Mrs. Dingley, in the height of her exultation at the success of her intrigues, that did not feel a touch of remorse. There are actions so sublime that even the most vulgar natures are elevated by the sight of them.

As to the Archbishop, he was very near refusing to receive that woman presented by such a hand. Never was deeper pity combined with greater admiration.

If Tisdal had shown the least sign of weakness, it is very possible that pity would have carried the day, and that the ceremony would not have been completed.

But he alone seemed unconcerned in what was passing. He had stepped forth without hesitation and without display—with just such an air as that with which the martyrs of old must have confessed the faith before the Roman Proconsuls.

The placidity of his countenance calmed every conscience, and by-and-bye, as the imaginations of all present cooled down, they measured by his self-possession the extent of his

sacrifice, and not the extent of his fortitude. They concluded that they had deceived themselves by indulging a natural propensity to believe what is extraordinary. He had seemed so strong, only because the passion with which he had to struggle was weak. His love had died away for want of hope. This was the usual consequence of a virtuous resolution and its reward ; it did not detract from the merit of his intentions. Tisdal was a noble-hearted man, but he was not a martyr.

These reflections, or, at any rate, the conclusions arising from them, occurred to the whole party, and restored them to serenity ; the ceremony was concluded without any fresh incident.

Only one more form remained to be gone through, that of signing the register ; it was laid upon the table, and the clerk offered the pen to every person in succession.

When it was Tisdal's turn to sign, he, like the rest, wrote his name with a firm hand beneath that of Esther Johnson ; and, as soon as this last duty was performed, his strength of will gave way, his courage forsook him, like a useless servant, his knees sunk under him, and he fell upon the floor insensible, with the pen still in his hand.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ladies of St. Mary's, after having been terrified at the idea of being followed, had ended, as we have seen, by recovering their self-possession, and by thinking that the obstinate phantom, which had appeared to them no less than thrice, existed only in their own imaginations.

They were mistaken. The phantom was a man ; that man was a spy sent by Mrs. Vanhomrigh, and he did not fail, on the following morning, to go and render her an account of what he had discovered — which was as follows :

Last night, Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Dingley, accompanied by a man in a cloak, whom, owing to the darkness of the

night, he had been unable to recognise, had entered the Deanery by the garden gate, of which the man in the cloak had the key. This was at about half-past twelve at night.

This report was so significant, that it scarcely needed a heart as jealous as Vanessa's to deduce from it the following conclusions :—The mysterious squire of the two ladies—the man with the garden-key—was none other than the Dean : the young lady was his mistress ; the older one was a good-natured friend, who for the sake of some sordid interests, furthered their intrigue.

How then ! was Swift the falsest of men ? Was his avowal of love a mere lie ? Impossible, it could not be ! Her recollections and her hopes equally forbade the thought. The avowal that was rung from him was sincere. She was sure that he loved her. She now saw but too clearly that his motives for avoiding her presence, for concealing his feelings towards her, for refusing to marry her, were less paternal than he chose to confess. But the indulgence inspired by hope is easy to those who are in love, and she felt quite disposed to forgive the Dean.

How could he resist a continual temptation, a plot which had doubtless been laid long beforehand ? It was, moreover, a connection of long standing, evidently anterior to her first meeting with Swift ; this was why Swift had fled from her in London and repelled her at Letcombe. Everything was explained, and this apparent crime became his excuse. If he were faithless, it was only to Stella. Ever since he really loved, he had grown weary of his chains : he longed to break them ; but was deterred by scruples of conscience, by kindness of heart, and possibly by the fear of a public scandal.

She must, therefore, continue to assist him. Since these women strove to conceal their misconduct, she would work upon this remnant of shame. She determined to intimidate them, to warn them that everything was known, and that they would be unmasked if they did not abandon their claims of their own accord.

Under the dominion of this idea, which favoured her natural inclination to violent measures, she wrote the following note to Mrs. Johnson :—

"Madam,

"I had reason to think that the explanation we had would not have been lost upon you, and that you would have dropped a connection which you knew could no longer be honourable. You have, nevertheless, continued it clandestinely. As I do not wish to believe that your tears of the other day were a mere pretence, and as the resource is still left to me of supposing you are ill-advised, I will address to you one question as a last warning:

"What can be said of a young woman who is admitted by stealth into a man's house, at one o'clock in the morning by a back door? What can be said, but that she is his mistress?

"I await your answer.

"ESTHER VANHOMRIGH."

Mrs. Dingley was present when the note arrived in Stafford Street. Nevertheless, to her great astonishment, Stella did not give it to her to read. She crushed the note in her hand, took pen and paper, wrote a few words with such vehemence that she split the pen, sealed her answer, resealed the letter she had just received, and going up to the cook-maid, who was waiting in a corner of the room:—"Give this to the messenger," said she, "and this other take yourself to the Deanery immediately, without losing a moment!"

Then, as soon as the door was shut, she threw herself, sobbing violently, into Mrs. Dingley's arms.

While Dingley was vainly trying to get an answer to her questions, the two messengers had started on their road, but one went much quicker than the other.

Mrs. Vanhomrigh's messenger had ridden at so conscientious a pace in coming, that he thought he might be a little less punctual in his return; and under the pretext of baiting his horse, he stopped at an ale-house to exchange, over a pot of beer, his country gossip for the news of the town.

The cook-maid, on the contrary, who had recognised the servant of the terrible Amazon, went in all haste to the Deanery.

But when she arrived, breathless, with her message, Patrick refused to deliver it. Since the morning, the

Dean had only opened his lips to give strict orders that he should not be disturbed under any pretext whatever.

However, if Patrick had been terrified by his master's taciturnity, the maid had been no less alarmed by the agitation of her mistress; and she insisted so much in behalf of her young lady, that Patrick seeing that, do what he would, the chances of a scolding were about equal, decided upon forcing his way into Swift's room.

He soon returned, all aghast and trembling in every limb: the mere sight of him made her tremble too.

"What the deuce was in that unlucky letter?" asked he. "I never saw my master in such a state."

"Do you think I read the letter?" answered the cook, pettishly, sorely repenting of her discretion.

But Patrick was already gone. His master had ordered him to saddle his horse, and he had no mind to draw down upon his own head the storm that was brewing.

While her letter was causing all this disturbance in Dublin, Vanessa, overcome by intense emotion, was counting the minutes in expectation of her messenger's return.

All of a sudden the door was violently burst open. It was the Dean. Oh, joy! But what a stern and angry countenance! He walked straight up to her, holding a paper in his hand; flung it vehemently into her lap, and left the room as he had entered it, without speaking a word.

It was her letter to Mrs. Johnson. She sat like one petrified!

But the sound of a horse's step roused her from her stupor. It was Swift riding home. Oh, he must not go thus! She must have an explanation with him! She would tell him that she knew all, and would forgive him! Nay, she would even ask his forgiveness, if he required it. But he must not go: no, he must not go!

She rushed out in pursuit of Swift. He had already passed the park gate. She ran as fast as she could. He put his horse into a gallop and the distance between them increased. She called after him again and again; he turned a deaf ear to her voice and seemed only to urge his horse the faster. Oh, Heaven! a turn in the road must soon hide him from her sight, and she had but just reached

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the park gate. She collected all her remaining breath and uttered a piercing shriek—a shriek that must reach the ears, and ought to pierce the heart of the fugitive. But he did not turn his head or slacken his pace—one moment, and he had disappeared.

He was gone! She uttered another shriek—a shriek of despair; and clutching with both hands the gate which had not been able to stop her lover, and which now seemed to have closed for ever between them, she shook it fiercely, and exhausted by this last effort, she let her head sink down upon the bars.

She had remained there for several minutes, motionless and, as it were, annihilated, when the gallop of a horseman up the avenue roused her from her reverie. A ray of hope flashed across her mind, but it lasted only a moment. It was not the Dean, but her servant bringing Esther Johnson's answer.

She snatched the note from the man's hand, it contained only these words:—"I am his wife!"

His wife! his wife! Oh, false, false!

This discovery restored to her all her energy. Her heart was now filled by a single feeling: that of fury. Retracing her steps she ran to the bower called by Swift after her name,—to the bower so rich in memorials of the past; and there, in her thirst for revenge, she tore up by the roots and trampled under foot the laurels she had planted for the ungrateful, perfidious one!

But she had other memorials more precious still than these to destroy. She ran in all haste back to the Abbey. Her servants had assembled at the noise; she passed through the midst of them without even seeing them, went straight up to a bureau in which she kept Swift's letters and the verses he had written to her, and taking them by handfuls from the drawers, crushing and tearing them to pieces, she flung them all about the room, stamping upon them and exclaiming, "False! false!" Suddenly she fell, like one dead, on the heap of torn papers.

On hearing her sister fall, little Mary, whom fear had kept outside the door with the servants, rushed in, uttering loud shrieks. They lifted Esther up, but she gave no sign of life. She was in a fit, she must be bled. The man,

who had just returned from Dublin, had not yet unsaddled his horse; he went full gallop to Cellbridge, which was the nearest place at which a surgeon could be found.

He soon found one, who immediately bled her profusely. Mrs. Vanhomrigh came to life again, but it was only to fall into a burning fever. She talked without ceasing, without taking breath, and with such rapidity that it was impossible to distinguish a single word, excepting that of "False!" which she repeated every minute with the utmost vehemence. The surgeon thought her state so alarming that he was the first to insist upon sending at once for further advice from Dublin.

Meanwhile he judged a second bleeding necessary. This bleeding put an end to the delirium. But calmness did not return with consciousness. All the blood she had lost was not enough to subdue so energetic a nature; and when the physician who had been sent for arrived, she exclaimed, before he had time to ask her a single question; "It is in vain, Sir! it is in vain! You don't know what ails me: I know what it is; no one recovers from it; it is fatal!"

And when the physician tried to combat these sinister predictions, she cut him short with a gesture of disdain, and addressing herself to those around her: "What I really want," said she, "is a lawyer; make haste and fetch me a lawyer."

They made haste to obey her. But the messenger was scarcely out of the house before she grew impatient at seeing no one arrive. It was in vain that the physician desired her to go to bed, or tried to induce her to take any medicine. She rejected his advice—she turned a deaf ear to his remonstrances; she was absorbed by one idea! She was full of impatience for the arrival of the lawyer—she must see a lawyer; why did not he come?

At length he arrived.

"Make haste, Sir, make haste!" she exclaimed, as soon as she saw him. "Make haste, sit down, and write my will; are you ready? I bequeath all that I possess to my sister Mary, who is here present, but on one condition. Listen, Mary; it's of no use crying like a child," said she, harshly; "you must listen and obey me. All those papers you see

scattered upon the floor must be picked up. I desire that they be arranged, printed, and published after my death—do you understand me? printed and published; all of them, verse and prose, all that he has ever written to me—the false one! You understand me, Sir? Here are your witnesses. Mark me; I disinherit my sister if they are not all printed and published; this is my deliberate will. If she disregards it, I disinherit and curse her.”

Mrs. Vanhomrigh’s old housekeeper, alarmed at her state, had taken upon herself to send for a clergyman, who sometimes visited at the Abbey; he was announced as if coming by accident.

“Come in, Sir, come in!” said she. “You have come to know where I wish to be buried—have not you? I will tell you: I wish to be buried in the churchyard of St. Mary’s, near Stafford Street; and I wish to have a fine tombstone, Sir—a tombstone of white marble—a tall tombstone, which can be seen from a distance—from a great distance; which will catch the eye of every one who goes along the street, and of all who look out of their windows; write all this down, too, Sir; write it down!” said she, turning to the lawyer.

All present stood aghast at her words; even little Mary herself could no longer shed a tear.

“Have you done, Sir?” she asked, before the lawyer, who had written down her instructions as fast as he was able, had finished—“make haste! make haste! and give me the pen; I feel that I have no time to lose.”

When she had signed the will herself, and made all the witnesses sign after her, the physicians again drew near, and she no longer offered any resistance to their care. She suffered herself to be put to bed, and all the counter-stimulants to be applied by which they hoped to ward off congestion of the brain.

But, spite of all their efforts, the delirium returned with all the former symptoms, the same volubility, and the same incessant repetition of the word “False! false!” At length she fell into a state of silence and prostration.

From time to time, at long intervals, she roused herself *from it, and made violent efforts to speak. But she was soon overcome by stupor, and this horrible struggle be-*

tween the soul which wanted to live for vengeance, and the body which wanted to die in order to find repose, lasted all day and all night.

Towards morning, at the first dawn of day, just as those who watched by her were dropping asleep, worn out by fatigue, while the most perfect silence reigned all around, she suddenly sat up in bed, exclaimed twice "False! false!" and with a shriek, which made the hairs of all who heard her stand on end, she fell back and expired.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE news of Mrs. Vanhomrigh's death soon spread in Dublin, and Tisdal was not the last to hear of it. He ran to the Deanery—Swift must stand in such great need of consolation!

The Dean was gone out. Where was he? Did he know the terrible news? Patrick not being able to answer any one of his questions, Tisdal left word that he would return in the evening.

He did return, but Swift had not come in. Tisdal went to Stafford Street to seek for information, but it was he who was expected to give it. They had not seen the Dean that day.

There could no longer be any doubt on the subject; he must be at Marley Abbey, where his presence might be so useful to poor little Mary Vanhomrigh; and Stella, who, though she did not accuse herself of being the cause of the cruel fate of her rival, had some remorse for the blow she had struck her—Stella found relief in the thought that Swift was kept away by this charitable duty.

But the following day having passed without bringing back Swift even to his own house, Stella requested Tisdal merely to inquire whether the Dean was at the Abbey, without interrupting the pious task which kept him there.

He was not there, nor had he been there at all!

Before delivering an answer so certain to cause uneasiness, Tisdal went first to the Archbishop's, and then to

succession to all the houses at which he thought he might learn some news of Swift; but it was all in vain. No one had seen the Dean, no one could guess where he might be.

He was forced to render an account of these fruitless inquiries, and the blow was a terrible one for poor Stella. She instantly put the worst construction upon everything: Swift was subject to violent vertiges, one of which had been brought on by the news of this sudden death. It was easy to guess what had happened; he had fallen down, he was drowned! nor could all the arguments in the world drive this idea out of her head.

Tisdal by no means shared these gloomy views. He concluded that the Dean, a prey to despair, did not choose to have witnesses to his grief, and that he would not quit his retreat until he felt that he could control himself. But this was not exactly the explanation to give to a jealous woman. It was better to leave her to her gloomy fancies: they were less cruel.

As Stella persisted in a hypothesis which had been opposed only with very feeble arguments, Tisdal, at the risk of seriously displeasing the Dean, could not refuse to cause inquiries to be made by the Police.

The inquiries were fruitless. The only trace they found was, that on the very day of the Dean's disappearance, a vessel had sailed from Dublin to Liverpool, and that among the passengers some persons thought they remembered seeing a man to whom the description given of Swift might possibly apply.

All this was very vague: but Tisdal, in his solicitude, ingeniously seized upon it as a means of appeasing Stella's agonies of mind.

There could be no doubt, he told her, that Swift, who had once before settled the affairs of the Vanhomrighs, and who knew their guardians, had thought his presence in London essential to Mary's interests. It was quite in accordance with his practical character to leave others to act the part of what he called weakness, and to prove his sympathy by services rather than by consolations.

"But to go without telling her."—"The vessel was on the point of sailing, and he had had no time."

"But at any rate he might have written!"—"No doubt he had written; but letters so often miscarry."

To support his words, Tisdal offered to go to London, and Stella, who knew the sincerity of his devotion, accepted the offer without hesitation.

This was a good sign: she did not yet despair. Tisdal only stayed to provide himself with some letters that might facilitate the success of his mission, and then started.

This long journey, made in the middle of winter, was undertaken by him without the slightest hope; but it was a means of gaining time. While Stella was awaiting the result of his inquiries, Swift would have succeeded in conquering his own grief, and might be in a state to assuage the sorrow which his absence had caused.

As might easily have been foreseen, Swift was not in London, and at the end of a month, Tisdal came back as wise as he went. He was not disappointed at this, but he was so when he found matters in Dublin exactly as he had left them. Swift had not made his appearance. No one knew whether he were dead or alive.

If Tisdal's journey had kept up Stella's courage, on the other hand his return was fatal to her. Her last hope of Swift's safety was at an end, and she fell into a state of despondency. From that day forth Tisdal had no further conjecture to suggest to her, no consolation to offer. She no longer wept, talked, or even listened to anything. Her senses seemed paralysed; it appeared as if some fibre in her heart were broken and all the functions of her life suspended.

Stella's state reacted upon those about her. Tisdal, who devoted all his time to her, scarcely exchanged twenty words with her. Even Dingley no longer dared to open her mouth. The orders given to the servants were delivered and replied to in an under-tone. They behaved as if they were in the room with a corpse.

And, indeed, what could they say? They could make no further inquiries; they had no further hope, and they did not wish to be comforted.

Thus the days dragged wearily on. Esther visibly grew thinner and thinner; and although the suffocations to which she was subject became more frequent, they were

not sufficient, in the opinion of her medical attendants, to account for her rapid loss of flesh. It seemed rather the effect of a gradual extinction of life than of any distinct illness.

Tisdal knew both the cause and the remedy. It was essential that Swift should come back. Mrs. Dingley, tired of their melancholy life, did not ask so much. While Tisdal longed for Swift's return, Dingley would have been content with knowing what had become of him.

She was one of those tender-hearted people, who, by the bed-side of a dying man never fail to say, "Truly it would be better if this were over, for his sake as well as that of others."

"If only," she constantly repeated, "one were sure that he was dead!"

She had been indulging this modest wish for a fortnight, and nearly two months had elapsed since Swift had disappeared, when one evening, while Esther was sitting, as usual, between her two friends, in her melancholy and silent parlour, several knocks at the street door announced a visitor.

She trembled, and convulsively grasped Tisdal's hand. It was Swift's knock! It was Swift himself!

Esther uttered a shriek of joy, and Dingley an exclamation of impatience: but joy and impatience were alike checked by the sight of Swift's sad and gloomy air.

He went straight up to Stella, kissed her on the forehead, gave his hand to Mrs. Dingley and to Tisdal, and sat down beside them without speaking, as if he had seen them only the day before.

The tea-things were on the table. In order to break the silence, Mrs. Dingley offered him a cup of tea, which he accepted. When the tea had been poured out, he turned to Tisdal and asked: "How are you, my excellent friend?" at the same time giving him an affectionate tap on the knee. Evidently this was to thank him for having been faithful to his post.

"Oh, I am very well myself," answered Tisdal.

This was to call Swift's attention to Esther's state. It was telling him better to conceal his own sorrow; and his answer proved that he had taken the hint.

"*She has grown very thin,*" he said. "*She must take*

care of herself, Dingley. People should not play tricks with their health."

After this sentence, which possibly referred to Mrs. Vanhomrigh, he again fell into a deep reverie, and began mechanically to stir his tea, without drinking it. Tisdal said to himself with a sigh, that Swift, whom he accused of having delayed his coming too long, had, on the contrary, returned too soon. And, indeed, was it he who had returned?

Could this man, who after an absence of two months found nothing to say to Stella to console her for so long an agony of suspense—this man, whose attention had scarcely been fixed for one minute upon Stella's pale face—could this indeed be Swift?

Poor Esther's look of painful surprise showed but too plainly that she asked herself the same question.

But what was to be done? Impatient as Swift was of all advice, how was he to tell him that, since he had had the courage to reappear, he ought likewise to have the courage to control his grief? Moreover, was it enough to tell him this—and was he able to command himself? But, on the other hand, if he left the cure to time, Stella would perish! Already Swift's melancholy look had had a fatal effect upon her. She had passed the night in tears and suffocation, and next morning Tisdal had found her more altered and more ill than he had ever seen her.

He requested that there might be a consultation of physicians on her case. He was not without anxiety himself, but his chief object was to inspire Swift with the same feeling. He little thought he should succeed so well. Esther was pronounced to be suffering from asthma, and to be threatened with consumption.

This sad news, which might have been expected to redouble the gloom of the house, on the contrary, restored to it its animated and joyous aspect. Swift shook off his dejection and recovered his speech. Stella had again become the object of his most delicate attentions. He encouraged her to take care of her health by a series of the most attractive promises; he made projects of going into the country, and of long rides on horseback, as soon as the weather and her health should allow. He never came

without bringing her some pleasant surprise, or having invented some charming amusement for the evening. He was the Presto of former days, but, if possible, more amiable, more affectionate than ever. He had resumed his little language: he tormented Dinglibus. It was he who now had a passion for cards, and asked to have his fortune told. It was a resurrection—a metamorphosis which seemed scarcely credible.

Although rejoicing in this change, Mrs. Dingley was almost indignant at it, and from time to time some old-maidish sneer against the inconstancy of men would escape her lips.

These indirect sarcasms were torture to Tisdal, who saw Swift both in Stella's company and away from her—who saw him pass suddenly from the gayest spirits to the most gloomy silence; he who every moment was tempted to throw himself into his arms, guessing, from his sorrow, all that his gaiety must cost him.

At any rate, his sacrifice was not in vain. Stella's moral cure seemed complete, and her health visibly improved. Nevertheless, spite of the precautions of Swift and Tisdal, she knew the nature of her malady, thanks to a blunder of Mrs. Dingley who thought she completely atoned for her imprudence by telling her that an asthma was a sure sign of a long life. But Stella needed no consolation. She was so happy to have recovered her dear Presto, that she did not think her illness too high a price to pay for the affectionate attentions he lavished upon her.

Tisdal wept for joy: he had been in such fear on her account during this long and wearing trial. It was a miracle that she had gone through it so well! He dared to hope, moreover, that by dint of acting in Stella's presence as if he were free from uneasiness, Swift would end by identifying himself with his part, and that this would be the reward of his self-denial and fortitude.

But all these efforts, these hopes, this security were destined to succumb to the fatality which hovered over this house.

Vanessa was dead and buried, but her vengeance survived her, and poor Stella was doomed to feel it in the *most cruel manner*.

Swift suddenly took it into his head that Stella should change her lodging. What? change just as the fine weather was coming, and they would soon be thinking of going into the country! If it were to go and live in the Deanery, well and good. But to incur the annoyance and expense of a removal for nothing! Mrs. Dingley could not account for such a caprice, and rejoiced in an opportunity of taking her revenge. She protested loudly against this fancy for change. What an idea to say their lodging was unhealthy! It was not so the least in the world! From the moment that there was a talk of leaving it, Mrs. Dingley discovered that it possessed all sorts of advantages. She was even seized with a sudden liking for their nickname of the Ladies of St. Mary's.

As for Esther, she was far too ready to do whatever her much-loved Presto wished, to suspect that he could have any hidden reason for this change. But Mrs. Dingley's exclamations roused her suspicions, and a discovery, which she might not otherwise have made, explained the whole mystery to her.

Too weak to go out, one of her amusements was looking out of the window; and as their lodgings were exactly opposite the front of St. Mary's Church, her eyes, with the melancholy instinct of sickness, most often rested upon the churchyard. For some time past she had observed workmen employed upon a new tomb, a pyramid of white marble, which far overtopped all the other grave-stones. Without mentioning it to any one, she involuntarily watched the progress of the monument with an interest she could not account for to herself.

This dangerous contemplation filled her mind with mournful ideas. She ended by asking herself if it was not for her that these masons were at work, and by persuading herself that she should not outlive the completion of the tomb.

Pursued by this sinister idea, when she saw that they had begun to cut the inscription, she could not resist the desire of reading it. And one morning, when Mrs. Dingley had gone out shopping with the cook, she took the arm of her nurse, under the pretext of feeling better and of wishing to take advantage of the sunshine, in order

to attend prayers in the church, and directed her steps towards the new tombstone.

But what was her consternation and terror when she read upon the monument :

Esther.

She scarcely had strength to drag herself as far as the church.

Fortunately, the nurse, who could not read, attributed her tottering gait to illness alone, and the length of time she passed in church on the bench on which she sank rather than sat down to devotion.

In the mean time, the stone-cutter, who was engraving the inscription, had continued his work, and when she left the church several letters of the second name were visible. This name was not hers, but her curiosity caused her to receive a blow scarcely less severe ; it was that of Mrs. Vanhomrigh.

Stella returned home in a state difficult to describe. She was choking, and it took her nearly a quarter of an hour to reach the parlour. Mrs. Dingley had not yet come home, and the nurse, who repented having yielded to the wishes of her sick charge, entreated her not to tell any one of the imprudent expedition they had made. Esther promised this without difficulty, she had reasons of her own for keeping it secret.

So that tomb was Mrs. Vanhomrigh's ! This was the reason why Swift wanted them to remove, she now understood it all. She remarked how factitious, constrained and nervous, was Swift's gaiety. His attentions were bestowed upon her as alms ; she was indebted for them to his pity and not to his love. From this moment, all his delicate stratagems wounded, instead of soothing her heart.

She had once more become jealous—jealous of the dead. She would no longer hear of removing. The sight of the churchyard was agony to her ; but in it she had a rival to watch ; and something told her that one day or another *she should surprise* Swift there in an act of *flagrant infidelity to herself*.

Alas ! were not the natural chain of facts sufficient to explain all ; what followed might, indeed, have made her feelings appear like a presentiment.

One evening Swift's attempts at liveliness had been more melancholy than common. After he was gone, and Dingley had retired to her own room, Esther put out her candle earlier than usual, and opened her window. She was in a state of terrible oppression, and wished to breathe the fresh night air : above all, she wanted to contemplate, undisturbed, the mournful spectacle with which she nightly fed the vulture that preyed upon her heart.

Midnight was passed. The sleeping town was wrapped in deep silence. The crescent moon, every minute veiled by passing clouds, shed an uncertain light upon every object, and peopled the churchyard with vague apparitions.

On a sudden—could it be an illusion ?—Esther thought she perceived through the darkness a more substantial form, a black figure, whose presence was betrayed by passing in front of some white tombstone.

An invincible curiosity and agitation took possession of her. Leaning with her whole body out of the window, she followed each step of the mysterious figure with the most intense eagerness. It still advanced, and, after several turns, it reached the tomb of Esther Vanhomrigh.

There it stopped. What did it there ? The clouds which darkened the moon did not allow her to see. But there the figure remained ; several minutes passed, and there it still was. This tomb was clearly the goal of its nocturnal pilgrimage.

At length the moon shone through the fleecy clouds, and Stella beheld a man wrapped in a black cloak, kneeling before the tomb.

Her suspicions were confirmed. She hastily left the window, stole down-stairs in the dark, opened the street door, crossed the road, and ran to the churchyard. The door was half-open : she entered, and walking over the graves, she went straight to the monument of Esther Vanhomrigh.

It was Swift—Swift, so completely absorbed in grief, in tears, that he had not heard her approach. She fell at *his feet in a swoon.*

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SWIFT lifted Stella up, carried her home, and laid her upon her bed. He spoke to her, he rubbed her hands; but she still remained senseless. He called for assistance, tore down the bells, burst open the doors and woke up the whole house.

They hurried into Stella's room, they held salts to her nose, they rubbed her temples with vinegar, they tried every imaginable means of restoring her to animation; but it was only at the end of half an hour that she began to give signs of life, and when she did come to herself, her state was no less alarming. She was suffocated and unable to lie down; they were forced to raise her up, and she sat with her body bent double and her chest resting against her knees. Her breathing was accompanied by a sharp hissing noise which threatened every moment to tear her chest to pieces. It was in vain that they dosed her with ether; it was in vain that they tried every palliative that commonly gave her relief: her suffocating sensations increased. Swift was alarmed. He left her under the charge of Mrs. Dingley, and ran to fetch a doctor.

The doctor was in bed asleep. Swift burst open his door, made him get up whether he would or no, and hurried him off, half-clad and half-asleep.

At length, during the course of the following day, the crisis yielded to medicine or to nature. But this cessation of suffering served but to reveal to her friends the progress made by the disease.

Swift now installed himself in Stafford Street.

He never quitted his beloved patient; he was with her by day and by night; he waited upon her with the most minute and jealous care; he let no one approach her but himself; everything passed through his hands. During the intervals of suffering he found courage to jest and laugh, in the hope of amusing and cheering her.

But all his efforts were vain—nay, mischievous. If *his attentions*—if his *gaity*—had formerly produced a *bad effect*, it was much worse now. Whenever Swift rendered

her any service, Esther could not restrain a nervous tremour which betrayed the wretchedness of her feelings.

Swift perceived it, and resigned the prominent place to Mrs. Dingley. But Stella, enlightened by suffering, had learnt to understand the baneful influence this woman had exercised over her destiny; and such was the irritable state of her nerves, that she involuntarily showed her aversion to her.

Tisdal alone was always welcome; all her smiles were for him; he alone could induce her to obey the physician's orders.

Mrs. Dingley, affronted at finding herself put aside, accused Esther of ingratitude; and finding it very convenient to be offended, left to the favourite friend all the labour consequent upon this unjust preference.

As to Swift, he longed to expiate his errors, involuntary as they had been, and he resigned himself to play the second part; but though usually hidden behind the curtain, he never left Esther's bedside for a minute.

Unfortunately, neither his self-imposed resignation, nor all the care and solicitude of which Esther was the object, nor all the resources of medical skill, were able to stay the progress of her disease. Swift did not deceive himself, nor did he conceal from the physicians that Esther's condition was complicated by mental distress; and, spite of the confidence which the profession usually feel in their drugs, they did not deny that some great and sudden joy might possibly cause a favourable change. This was enough to decide Swift.

His soul was torn by the thought of what he was about to do; his ever-scrupulous conscience saw in it a sort of outrage to the memory of one who was dear and sacred to him! But Stella's life was at stake; he no longer hesitated: he would make his marriage public.

Tisdal, to whom he announced this resolution, thanked him with tears in his eyes, and hastened to tell Stella; but, to his great surprise and grief, she refused, saying it was too late.

Too late! This word pierced like a dagger into Swift's heart. What a reproach it conveyed for the past! what

a threat for the future! Too late! And was it come to this?

Of all our sensations, anxiety is perhaps the most inexhaustible. More alarmed than he had thought it possible he could become, Swift summoned a fresh consultation of physicians.

He assembled all the most celebrated members of the faculty at Dublin: he called their attention to the gravity of the case, with all the energy of which he was master; and awaited the result of their deliberations with the utmost anxiety.

The consultation lasted a long time. Burning with impatience, and fearing that he might be unable to conceal it, he left Stella's bedside, and paced up and down outside the door of the parlour in which the physicians were consulting. He heard their voices at intervals, and listened with eager attention; but he could not distinguish a word: he could tell nothing to Tisdal, who glided every minute from Esther's sick chamber to learn the news, and glided back again as quickly as possible, so as not to alarm her. At length the door opened.

"Well!" said Swift, whose heart beat faster than that of a criminal awaiting his sentence.

The physicians looked at each other with a solemn air; they then made a sign to him to address his question to the most eminent among them.

This one, by way of answer, closed his eyes and puffed out his lips.

"Well!" reiterated Swift.

The spokesman at length condescended to explain his meaning, but his explanation was no less mysterious than his pantomime. It was nothing but ill-disguised inuendoes. Swift got angry.

"What does all this mean?" exclaimed he; "what do you take me for? and for what object have you come hither? Do you imagine that I called you in in order to enlighten each other or to enlighten me, if you are able to do so? Judging by the airs of importance which you give yourselves, it would seem that one is taking a liberty *when one asks you a question.* It would seem as if the

matter under consideration were your affair and not ours. But on leaving this house, gentlemen, you will have to think of other sick patients whom you have to visit. I have only one patient, I shall think only of her. All the faculties of my head and heart will be taxed to the uttermost to discover her disease and to seek the remedy. By what right then would you exclude me from your secrets, which are in fact mine? If you have a conviction, tell it me, whatever it may be: I am not a child. If you have none, spare me your mysterious airs."

Startled and wounded by this apostrophe, the physicians passed from one extreme to another. At first it had been impossible to wring an answer from them; they now roughly blurted out that there was no hope.

On hearing this declaration, Swift, who always thought himself stronger than he really was, staggered and fell like a bull struck down with a mallet.

The physicians bled him, prescribed a few remedies, and left the house.

Swift took none of these prescriptions. He was ashamed of having shown such weakness: he staggered violently against his disease—against his grief. It was nothing—merely one of those vertiges to which he was subject: he was not ill! He rejected all Tisdal's attentions; he even repelled him with asperity.

This struggle was interrupted by the violent ringing of a bell in Esther's room. She was seized with a frightful fit of suffocation—she had lost the power of speech; there issued from her chest nothing but that sharp hissing sound—that involuntary voice of the disease which choked the other. She caused all the windows and doors to be thrown open; she motioned all her friends away from her—she needed all the air of the room herself. She was like a drowned person who feels himself sinking beneath the water; she raised herself up every moment on her hands. But in making these efforts to sit up and breathe, a blood-vessel burst in her chest, and the blood gushed out of her mouth.

And no physician with her! From the moment this attack had begun, they had vainly sought one from house

to house. "The question was, whether she was not in her last agony.

"Happily the vomiting ceased: it had even relieved her. She was extremely weak, but she breathed more freely.

Feeling somewhat more composed, she wished to profit by it in order to receive the consolations of religion. Tisdal proposed to go and fetch the Archbishop.

"It is useless," said she; "are not you here? No one on earth has so much credit in heaven as you."

Swift had gone up-stairs on hearing the violent ring which summoned Tisdal to his post by Esther's bedside. But he was silent, motionless, and as it were stupified. He had the air of one who saw nothing—he felt nothing. However, he knelt down with the rest while Tisdal read the prayers for the sick.

Esther listened to them with fervour, and at intervals her voice responded to Tisdal's. But it grated painfully on the ear; it sounded dull and broken, as if some foreign substance barred the passage; and the imposing gravity of the ceremony could scarce restrain the sobs with which every heart was bursting.

But when the prayers were ended, whether it was that this act of piety had sustained her until that moment, or that it had exhausted her, she heaved a deep sigh, and let her head fall upon her shoulder, like Christ on the Cross.

"Dead! she is dead!" Tisdal could not restrain this cry of despair. He raised her head; it again dropped upon her breast. He held a looking-glass to her lips; not a breath dimmed the glass. "Dead! dead!" The looking-glass fell from his hand.

He had said that Esther's happiness was necessary to enable him to support the burden of his life of sacrifices; and now the reward of so many efforts had escaped him! He turned upon Swift with fury, seized him by the collar, and dragging him up to Esther's death-bed—"You are her murderer! you have killed her!" cried he. "Come and gloat over your work!"

Swift suffered himself to be dragged along without resistance: the haughty Swift received these bitter re-

proaches without uttering a word. Who knows whether he even heard them ?

But, if he did not hear them, another ear did. Esther was not dead ; she half-raised her head. It seemed as though she came down from heaven to perform the ministry of the angels. She appeased Tisdal by a look ; motioned him to take Swift's hand ; and then, with that energy of heart which makes the dumb to speak, and loosens for a moment the embraces of death, she recovered her speech as she had recovered her life, in order to recal Tisdal to resignation. His task of devotion was not yet accomplished. There still remained a sick soul to comfort. She bequeathed this care to him.

Tisdal tried to say that he accepted the bequest, but tears choked his utterance ; and, unable to make any other reply, he threw his arms round Swift, who was stupified and idiotic with grief, and strained him to his breast, in token of adoption.

Esther understood him : she thanked him with a smile ; and, tranquil from that moment, without a struggle, without pain, the smile still upon her lips, she rendered up to her Creator her soul, pure and spotless as when she had received it from His hands.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

STELLA had spoken the truth ; Tisdal's task was not yet ended. It was not enough that he had sacrificed to her while living all his hopes, he must, now she was dead, sacrifice to her his despair. He was not at liberty to mourn ; his duty was to comfort.

The reed had bent before the storm, the oak had been rent asunder ; the strong was forced to lean for support upon the weak. Swift had gone mad.

Stella's last sigh had suddenly roused him from his lethargy, and had driven him to frenzy. He wandered all day and all night about the spacious rooms of the Deanery, *talking with a vehemence and volubility which seldom*

allowed the exact sense of his words to be understood. One name—that of Esther—was incessantly on his lips. But it was difficult to make out which of the two unhappy women who had borne that name occupied his thoughts at the moment, since he confounded them with each other in his diseased brain. His madness realised the fusion which his affection had formerly dreamed.

If this fixed idea of a double Esther ceased for a moment to besiege his mind, it was to give place to another no less obstinate and still more distressing, because it showed that he was conscious of his state, and that he had reason enough left to know how much he had lost. He wanted to found a mad-house.

“We are all mad,” he exclaimed. “Of what use are theatres? or palaces? or churches? Build mad-houses! We are all mad! we are all mad!”

And, following out this idea with feverish anxiety, he complained of the expense of his house; he imposed upon himself all sorts of privations, he seized all the money he could lay his hands upon with the greatest avidity, in order to amass the sum required to build his mad-house.

This violence alarmed the physicians less than it did those immediately about him. It was, they said, the natural progress of his disease, the sharp twinges of the wound after the first stunning shock of the blow. He only wanted soothing medicine and careful nursing.

If nursing was all that he wanted, the patient was sure to recover. He had Tisdal with him and Tisdal only; for Stella was scarcely under ground before Mrs. Dingley had set about finding a new home, and was gone to join housekeeping with some old maid of her acquaintance. But Tisdal was a host in himself. He was profoundly moved at seeing the degradation of Swift's great intellect; and, above all, Stella's dying commands were ever present to his mind.

He never left Swift by day, nor yet by night. He bore with exemplary patience all his outbursts of violence. He had a knack of quieting him by entering into all his ideas, and of diverting him from them when they were too painful—too absorbing. In one word, he paid the debt contracted beside Stella's death-bed, not only with the

strict exactness of a scrupulous conscience, but with the prodigality of a heart o'erflowing with pity and charity.

So much solicitude was not in vain. Swift subdued, or rather retarded, for forty years the horrible malady which had been so near depriving him of reason. Reason and pride returned together; and, more humiliated by the cause than by the nature of his malady, he henceforth concealed the wounds inflicted upon his heart beneath an assumption of cynical indifference.

Thus whenever he went to pray in St. Mary's churchyard, or at Patrick's Cathedral, at the tomb of either Esther, it was always in secret, and at hours when Tisdal alone, unknown to Swift, was aware of it.

One day, when surprised contemplating some most precious relics, he laughed bitterly, and casting them aside with disdain, he said :

"It is nothing, less than nothing ! a woman's hair !"

Tisdal's housekeeper, Mistress Jebb, was utterly scandalised.

"What a hard-hearted, wicked man that is !" she repeated, whenever this sort of incident occurred.

Once only he seemed disposed to confidence. Tisdal was astonished at hearing a confession wrung from this impenetrable heart. It was Mistress Jebb's son who gave the occasion for it.

The two friends were returning home one evening from their daily walk, when they heard screams in the direction of a bonfire, round which several children were at play. They hastened their steps, fearing that some accident had taken place. It was simply Mistress Jebb's boy pulling the ear of another child younger than himself with might and main.

"How now, you little coward ! you are taking a base advantage of your strength !" said Swift. "What has this child done that you ill use him ?"

"He was playing with fire, please your Reverence."

The child remembered the lesson given him by Swift at Laracor. Swift now applied it to himself.

"It was that did all the mischief !" said Swift with a sigh, pressing his friend's hand.

This exclamation was all that escaped him, and he

again took refuge for ever in his usual silence and irony, that irony which conceals a heart truly tender, truly modest, nobly disdainful of what is vulgar, but which is so easily misunderstood that after the lapse of a century, after so many services rendered by Swift to the cause of reason and humanity, we are now attempting, in a manner not, perhaps, very conclusive, to defend the memory of this great genius, of this noble heart, the memory of the author of "Gulliver," of the author of the "Drapier's Letters," against the Mrs. Jebbs of England, alas ! and of Ireland.

THE END.



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